CHARLES DICKENS AND THE IDEA OF MADNESS

by

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CONTENTS

PREFATORY NOTES

The style of presentation in this dissertation is in accordance with the Style Sheet of the Department of English, University of Tasmania.

Primary Texts are given full bibliographical references in footnotes when first used; after which they are cited in the text by chapter only, or title and chapter if there is a risk of ambiguity. Where a novel is divided into Books and chapters, this is expressed in numerical notation only; thus, Book I, chapter 1 is cited as I.1.

Secondary sources are named in the footnotes, first in full and then by author only. Where reference has been made to more than one work by an author, author and title are given.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other higher degree or graduate diploma in any university, and to the best of my knowledge and belief contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

The concept of madness has intrigued authors from classical Greek times until the present day. In this, the Victorians in general, and Dickens in particular, proved to be no exception. While this thesis is primarily concerned with Dickens's use of madness as a literary device, the first chapter discusses his ideas in relation both to literary tradition and to contemporary social and medical views of insanity. From the literary tradition the Victorians received several conventional uses of madness, together with an interest in portraying the unusual or abnormal in human behaviour. However, not only were these literary conventions modified by new medical and sociological developments relating to insanity, but the novelists' portrayal of the more progressive attitudes was also influenced by the demands of the novel as a form.

The Idiot figure is perhaps the most potent example of a traditional symbol of madness. The second chapter examines the characteristics of this traditional figure and the difficulties that Dickens experienced in attempting to adapt it to suit the requirements of the Victorian novel. To circumvent these difficulties, the role hitherto assigned to the Idiot figure was increasingly transposed to more ordinary characters who could be embraced within the social framework of the novel. This transposition worked with varying degrees of success.

In melodramatic fiction before Dickens, madness had been used chiefly as a form of punishment. Dickens's interest in the criminal mind led naturally to an interest in madness and criminality: chapter III demonstrates the ways in which he modified a conventional approach. This development involved an increasing exploration

of the actual mental state of a criminal; an exploration that evoked sympathy with the criminal's condition and raised questions about environmental conditioning and criminal responsibility.

Chapter IV examines the ways in which Dickens began to use madness as a symptom of a society in which much had gone wrong. Madness acquired a new symbolic status in novels in which it could be integrated thematically to reinforce social attacks. This resulted in tentative explorations of the psychotic states of characters who could not adjust to the social pressures of Victorian society. The more Dickens's portrayals of madness reflected serious concerns in the novels, the less conventional their presentation became.

This increasingly serious use of madness in fiction affected what had previously been one of its simplest uses - the portrayal of insanity and eccentricity for comic purposes. Chapter V discusses Dickens's progression from using madness primarily as comic relief to his using it to express the fundamental alienation of eccentric characters from the society in which they live. This sharpened the question of society's responsibility for the madness of people within it.

CHAPTER I

THE IDEA OF 'MADNESS' IN DICKENS'S TIME

Charles Dickens's novels deal with a vast panorama of life. It is not surprising, then, that in a huge canvas of characters some exhibit unusual states of mind and some are mentally or emotionally unbalanced. As one might expect, these vary in the precision with which their deviation from the norm is delineated, in the importance they have in their respective novels, and even in the purpose for which Dickens has included them at all.

To the eighteenth-century English, madness had meant, quite simply, unreason. By the time Dickens was an adult, a new debate had arisen. Public awareness was kindled in part by the medical debates on the causes of insanity and on the best methods for treating the insane. It was further aroused by controversy surrounding the social and legal status of the insane. As madness began to lose its simple eighteenth-century definition of unreason and came to be regarded, like other medical disorders, as varying in degree and kind (and capable, in some cases, of effective cure), psychiatric medicine began to emerge as a distinct and separate profession.

In the literary tradition, authors were primarily concerned with the broad idea of madness as a phenomenon rather than the portrayal of particular mental conditions with specific definable characteristics and medical causes. However, the latter aspect does sometimes intrude as a result of personal observation so that psychiatrists have been able to use characters in literature as examples of recognisable forms of psychosis. It is in this area that critical attention has often been focused and in the body of Dickensian studies I would draw attention to the works of Russell

Brain, Edmund Bergler, Leonard Manheim and Michael Steig in particular.[1] For literary purposes, however, authors used madness to express extreme emotions and types of behaviour which, by contrast, helped to define more normative behaviour and which, by posing alternative sets of values, called in question or commented upon the accepted values of a particular era.[2]

This use of madness for literary purposes was not confined to clearly defined cases of insanity: it included such deviance as is better described as eccentric or grotesque. With mere eccentricity, the difference is one of degree rather than kind: being a very mild form of madness, it was used within a comic framework. With the grotesque, a concept of madness was often embodied within a grotesque aesthetic - the aesthetic that challenged assumptions by combining animal and human characteristics within the one figure to gain the paradoxical responses of laughter and fear. What provokes this dual response is the abnormality that is presented, an abnormality that can be either comical or terrifying, or can be an uneasy combination of both. As the grotesque aesthetic became incorporated in the Victorian novel the purely physical contradictions became subsidiary to the presentation of the grotesque as indicative of mental aberration. It became another method whereby authors challenged prevailing views of normality.

1. See Bibliography. Related to this are the studies in the 'double' in literature as a method of presenting psychic conflicts and oppositions. A good survey of this aspect is Robert Rogers, A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970).
2. A very broad survey of madness in Victorian literature can be found in J. Reed, Victorian Conventions (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1975), ch. 9; and for a brief survey of the use of madness in the Victorian novel, and its historical literary perspective, see P.F. Saagpakk, 'A Survey of Psychopathology in British Literature from Shakespeare to Hardy', Literature and Psychology, 18 (1968), pp. 135-65.

The concern of this thesis is not, however, with the semantics of psychiatric definition, but with the artistic portrayal by Dickens of a wide range of what he considered to be abnormal behaviour, used as a means of provoking certain responses from the reader. Differentiation between eccentricity, abnormality, the grotesque and insanity will be made where such distinctions seem required by Dickens, rather than offered as a clearly defined means to assess his usage. In any particular instance, characteristics of one form may include characteristics or another. Indeed, in the literature of the nineteenth century generally, such categories become far less distinctive than they had been in previous centuries.

In Dickens's time, the definition, cause and treatment of madness were contemporary questions of debate.[1] These debates, like those on all other major social problems of the time, were not confined to members of the relevant professions but were carried on in public through newspaper articles, public speeches and committee meetings of concerned citizens. It is not surprising, therefore, that the issue of madness in society, along with other contemporary issues, was reflected in the novels of the period. Where madness was concerned, the contemporary beliefs and debates merged with accepted literary traditions, with the result that the literary traditions became modified, and in some cases became obsolete. These traditions were also modified by contemporary thought on the purpose and function of a novel and by what was

1. For a background on the development of thought on madness, see Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Random House, 1965). For the Victorian period, Andrew Scull (ed.), Madhouses, Mad-Doctors and Madmen: The Social History of Psychiatry in the Victorian Era (London: Athlone Press, 1981) is particularly useful.

regarded as acceptable for inclusion in it - which usually meant acceptable by middle-class standards.

Madness as a feature determining character and motivation, or as a result of some obsession or deterioration (sometimes, but not always, moral deterioration), rather than as a convenient excuse for it, began to become a feature of the authors' presentation. Madness was no longer seen as easily distanced from everyday life: novelists now saw madness as one more feature of the contemporary world that formed the background for their novels, and it often became a focal point for their social attacks. Theirs was still a literary rather than a medical approach, and it is the literary use that is of prime concern here.

J.M. Brown, in Dickens: Novelist in the Market Place, stated that part of his purpose was to 'argue that treating literature as documentary reportage is a simplistic and inadequate approach, which denies the specifically literary characteristics of literature.'[1] While it is not my intention to re-argue this case in this thesis, I have adopted a similar approach to Brown's in that medical phenomena are of concern only in so far as they have been utilised as a novelistic concern. Even when authors were consciously concerned with the medical debates of their time, the medical concerns were modified by both literary conventions and the demands of individual novels in which they appeared. Clearly however, the novelists were not unaffected by the social and medical attitudes of their time to madness and its relation to society. A brief survey of these prevailing Victorian attitudes will enable Dickens's approach to be seen in its wider contemporary context.

1. J.M. Brown, Dickens: Novelist in the Market Place (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 4.

The desire to understand abnormal states of mind had its roots in the nineteenth century's new moves towards an ordered society, or at least to a society where unpleasant things were moved off the streets. These moves led reformers to work out methods of dealing with poverty, education, crime, insanity.[1] Some methods, of course, were failures, and much debate ensued on which methods in the varying instances should be adopted. Debates on insanity and the status of the insane continued because many fundamental sociological questions remained unanswered or at least were controversial. Chief among these were the questions of what degree of aberrant behaviour constituted insanity to the extent of requiring confinement and who was qualified to make decisions about it.

Certainly, someone had to make such decisions if the Victorians were to banish the mentally disturbed from their midst. The Victorian public tended to overlook its responsibility by treating the asylum as something apart, a place that was necessary but also disreputable.[2] Thus, while they were horrified by the thought of lunatics at large, and fervently supported involuntary confinement, they were equally terrified by the thought of sane persons languishing in madhouses. They failed to acknowledge that their support of the asylum system necessitated a distinction being made between insanity and sanity. The belief persisted that a clear distinction could be made, despite the fact that the Commissions at which doctors gave conflicting reports about the sanity or otherwise of plaintiffs, and the revelations that

1. R.D. Altick, Victorian People and Ideas (New York: Norton, 1973), especially in chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, gives a conveniently compressed account of the social developments of the time.
2. Peter McCandless, 'Liberty and Lunacy: The Victorians and Wrongful Confinement', in Scull, p. 357.

illegal confinements had occurred even when all the due processes of the law had been observed, together demonstrated that no such clear distinction could be made. The unease with which the public felt these conflicting demands, however remotely the contradictions were perceived to exist, probably contributed to the vehemence of people's response when some injustice in this area was exposed. But the vehemence was never such that it called into question the actual need for the asylum system. Public outcry centred on borderline cases, and often the judgements were not as clear-cut as the final decisions of juries might lead us to believe.

Activists strove for legal reform and for humanization of the treatment of the insane. Such work can be seen as part of the post-Enlightenment awakening of 'social conscience' in defence of the wronged and afflicted members of society. In the literary world the problem of madness was directly evident because many writers had experience of madness in themselves or in those near to them. Such leading figures as William Cowper, Christopher Smart and William Collins had not been entirely sane. Some, like Hazlitt, knew madness in their own families, and others, like John Clare or Arthur Symons, in themselves.[1] To this list could be added Blake, who was scarcely sane, and Tennyson whose father was unstable and one of whose brothers went insane. Among Dickens's close acquaintances, Thackeray's wife became insane, Lytton's wife's instability was made public by her scurrilous attacks on him in the popular media, and Charles Reade's involvement, in 1858, with the case of an alleged lunatic, Fletcher, made him a crusader in the area of lunacy reform;[2] a crusade he carried

1. Reed, p. 214.
2. Charles Reade, 'Our Dark Places', Readiana (London: Chatto & Windus, 1890), pp. 113-25, and The Rev. Compton and C.L.

on with such fervour that some critics have seen it as indicative of apprehensions about his own sanity.[1] Later in his life, Reade was actually accused of religious monomania, and while the charge appears to have gone beyond the facts, his relatives nevertheless felt the need to refute it at some length.[2]

The one fundamental 'fact' on which all thinking about insanity had been agreed upon from Elizabethan times (and before) was that madness was a 'different' way of seeing reality. The Romantics had exalted this way of thinking as a liberation, in contrast to the Augustan Age which saw the irrational in terms of unreason and as something which, because of this, needed to be suppressed, avoided and hidden away.

The Victorian era now revealed a bifurcated attitude. On one level, humanist concern for the actual condition of the insane led to reformist ideas, public awareness of the problem as a social concern, and debates on insanity which were reflected in the 'purpose' novels, particularly the sensation novels of the 1860s. It was the desire to understand how the mind worked that was at the basis of the experimental work done by phrenologists, mesmerists and alienists as they groped toward some form of clinical definition. Such a concern is also evident in the literature of the time in the continued and developing interest in unusual states of mind as the result of guilty psychic states, often revealed through the thoughts and hallucinations of criminals, dream consciousness and drug-induced perceptions. These offered convenient ways of exploring those thought processes without

Reade, Charles Reade: A Memoir (London: Chapman & Hall, 1887), pp. 82-83.

1. Wayne Burns, Charles Reade (New York: Bookman Associates, 1961), pp. 201-02, and Winifred Hughes, The Maniac in the Cellar (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 91-92.
2. Compton and C.L. Reade, pp. 330-36.

overtly exalting in them or making them appear more attractive that the rational thought patterns of 'sane' characters. Even so, Lytton and Collins, more than Dickens, were frequently attacked as doing just this - making the unusual more appealing than the usual by showing sympathy for thought patterns and ways of behaviour that were at variance with the accepted moral and social mores of Victorian England.

In opposition to this exploratory tendency, there persisted the fear of the irrational and insanity, along with the prejudice that insanity was evidence of moral degradation. Some people believed that irrational thoughts, like those revealed in hallucinations, ought to be suppressed, as should non-conformist behaviour. Such modes of thought and behaviour were contrary to the well established and orderly progress of a society whose reality was seen in terms of the material world, a world dependent upon conformity, hard work, logical and methodical thinking, and adherence to middle-class family values. Behaviour outside this narrow range of respectability was regarded as excessive and indicative of some degree of madness. Thus, while insanity was no longer disreputable, the stricter Victorian code resulted in the view that all sorts of behaviour hitherto regarded as eccentric or boorish were a sign of insanity.

But it was also an age of investigation and experimentation: hence the interest in different theories about any one issue. This was an era that tried to understand the complexity and variety of social life, a complexity increased by expanding industrialisation. In response to popular interest in botany, geology, palaeontology, Darwinian theory, specialists attempted to regiment and classify their ideas. In this context the development of

psychiatric research by Freud and his predecessors, the alienists, was another manifestation of the cataloguing and classification habit, so that the old myths became pathologised, given scientific terminology, and differentiated in kind and degree.

Within the medical profession, attempts to arrive at some credible scientific basis regarding insanity and its treatment led to the rise of the alienists as a specialist group. The term 'alienist' was used to signify 'one engaged in scientific study or treatment of mental disease'. It was in common usage in the nineteenth century and it is more historically precise than its modern equivalent, 'psychiatrist'.[1] Debate between alienists, mesmerists, phrenologists and moralists circled around three areas - terminology and causation; treatment; and staffing in asylums.

Amidst the rival theories about terminology and causation,[2] perhaps the most significant sociologically was that of Dr John Conolly. He not only regarded insanity as the aggravation of common thoughts and feelings that could occur in all minds but were dwelt upon only by a mind diseased, but he also asserted that medical men were in error when they sought a strong definable boundary between sanity and insanity. Such a boundary was not only imaginary and arbitrarily placed, but hurtful to those segregated. Madness was no longer in a realm clearly discrete from reason, so it was no longer necessary to fear the outrageous

1. Roger Cooter, 'Phrenology and British Alienists, ca. 1825-1845', in Scull, p. 92 note 9, quoting from Century Dictionary (New York: Century, 1889),Vol. I.
2. For the views of these rival theorists see Scull, Part I, which contains articles by W.F. Bynum Jr., 'Rationales for Therapy in British Psychiatry, 1780-1835', pp. 35-57; Roger Cooter, 'Phrenology and British Alienists, ca. 1825-1845', pp. 58-104; Andrew Scull, 'Moral Treatment Reconsidered: Some Sociological Comments on an Episode in the History of British Psychiatry', pp. 105-18.

or unusual in human behaviour.[1] Conolly's views, disputed by some of his colleagues, were widely respected, and he was one of the leaders in the development of medical thought in this area. He was also an advocate of the moral treatment of patients and the use, wherever possible, of non-restrictive treatment. This in itself was a contentious issue: the advantages and disadvantages of the non-restraint system as compared to the confinement theories, the efficacy of various drugs, medicines, emetics, shower baths, solitary confinement and useful employment were all matters that were being hotly debated by theorists and practitioners[2]

As mental alienation came to be regarded as a specialist area, the need for medically trained doctors as Supervisors of Asylums and for more skilful and highly professional people as attendants was recognised. To attract such people was difficult since the more competent were prone to avoid such places because of the ill repute into which many had fallen.[3] The medical

1. Reed, p. 197 quoting from John Conolly, An Inquiry Concerning Indications of Insanity With Suggestions for the Better Protection and Care of the Insane (London: John Taylor, 1830; repr. Dawsons, 1964).
2. For the conflicting views on the treatment of the insane, see W.A.F. Browne, On Insanity and Asylums for the Insane (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1937), pp. 100-72; Conolly, An Inquiry ..., pp. 10-33, 478-96; and The Treatment of the Insane Without Mechanical Restraints (London: Smith & Elder, 1856); D.H. Tuke, Chapters in the History of the Insane (London: Kegan Paul, 1882; repr. Amsterdam: E.J. Bonset, 1968), pp. 204-64. For modern discussions of these treatments, see W.L. Parry-Jones, The Trade in Lunacy (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 168-220; Scull, pp. 105-08, and from the same book, N.J. Tomes, 'A Generous Confidence: Thomas Story Kirkbride's Philosophy of Asylum Construction and Management', pp. 121-43; John Walton, 'The Treatment of Pauper Lunatics in Victorian England: The Case of Lancaster Asylum, 1816-1870', pp. 166-97; and Parry-Jones, 'The Model of the Geel Lunatic Colony and Its Influence on the Nineteenth-Century Asylum System in Britain', pp. 201-17.
3. The difficulty of obtaining suitable doctors and attendants is dealt with by Tuke, pp. 244-48, and Parry-Jones, The Trade in Lunacy, pp. 74-95.

profession was hampered by the exposure of unscrupulous supervisors who were unqualified and whose chief aim was financial. The notoriety that such supervisors fell into, along with that of such pliable doctors and apothecaries as readily signed certificates of lunacy, was detrimental to the work done by the alienists. As usual it was the notorious that gained most publicity, and in the popular imagination they tended to be regarded as indicative rather than exceptional. Nonetheless, the profession tried to upgrade psychiatric medicine and give it a more respectable status. The Association of Medical Officers of Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane was founded in 1841 and its journal, the Asylum Journal, was first published in 1853. It became the Asylum Journal of Mental Science in 1855, and was renamed The Journal of Mental Science in 1857. Another contemporary journal was the Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology, which first appeared in 1848 and continued until 1860. In these journals and at professional meetings the alienists advocated that doctors be trained in psychiatric medicine as a distinct and separate profession.

But the professional men, such as Conolly, carried their debates before Parliamentary commissions, and they published in medical journals rather than in the popular media. Newspapers mainly reported the defects and abuses in the system. Peter McCandless has warned that such reports and the public outcries that followed them should be put in perspective.[1] Although periodically some real or imagined injustice would inflame the public and result in articles and letters in the newspapers demanding inquiries and suggesting reforms, the uproar seldom

1. McCandless, p. 342.

lasted beyond a few months. The Public soon turned their attention elsewhere. This is true, but as McCandless also acknowledged, the work was continued by a small group of activists. Moreover, through the century, these 'lunacy panics' were of sufficient frequency to keep the public continously aware of the problem, even if they were not actively concerned about it. This awareness was reinforced by popular fiction that purported to expose the defects of the system and did so by capitalizing on the controversial medical issues of the time. It was this aspect that became foremost in the public mind.[1]

Some medical men published their opinions and findings in book form, the most notable being W.A.F. Browne, J. Conolly and D.H. Tuke.[2] The purpose of such books was not only to share medical viewpoints but to enlighten the public at large. Browne, for example, stated that part of his purpose was to alleviate the misfortunes of the insane that resulted from ignorance, apathy or cruelty. He sought to correct popular misconceptions and to arouse public concern for the improvement of the asylum system.[3] It remains doubtful, however, whether information disseminated in this manner effectively penetrated the popular imagination in contrast to the adverse reports. Then, as now, such specialist books were read only by an informed few: the positive work being done in the area was known only to a minority. That Dickens was part of this minority is suggested by the fact that some

1. On the abuses and defects of the system, apart from the contemporary works mentioned in p. 10, n.2, see Parry-Jones, The Trade in Lunacy, pp. 221-80, and McCandless, pp. 339-62.
2. The works by Browne, Conolly and Tuke are indicative of the attempt by medical men to sway opinions by publication in book form. Conolly wrote at least nine books on mental disorders and their treatment, and the bibliography in Parry-Jones, The Trade in Lunacy, pp. 335-45, shows that these publications are representative of many others that appeared at the time.
3. Browne, pp. 1-2.

of the specialist literature was found in his library in 1870.[1] Some of these books were presentation copies, and just how fully read they were we are not in a position to know; but his owning them does attest to Dickens's acquaintance with the more advanced thinking of his time.

Dickens himself was involved with insanity in several ways. He was a close friend of Dr Conolly, and he visited asylums to observe the conditions that existed there. His comments on the ones he visited in America were recorded in American Notes in 1842. He was particularly impressed by the State Hospital for the Insane in South Boston and another one in Hartford, both of which were run on similar principles to those used by Dr Conolly at Hanwell, and both of which Dickens regarded as evidence of the superiority of moral influence over physical restraint as a method of treatment.[2] His journalistic interest in asylum reform is further evident in the articles that appeared in the magazines of which he was editor. One of these articles, 'A Curious Dance Round a Curious Tree', which appeared in Household Words on 17 January 1852, was written by Dickens himself in collaboation with W.H. Wills and was the result of a visit Dickens had made to St. Luke's in London. The article describes the advances that

1. For a list of these, see L.F. Manheim, 'Dickens' Fools and Madmen', Dickens Studies Annual, 2 (1972), pp. 71-72.
2. Charles Dickens, American Notes (Fireside Edition (1842; repr. London: Chapman & Hall, n.d., [1903-1907]), chapters 3 and 5. He was less impressed with the one on Rhode Island where he believed that local political conditions resulted in inefficiency of administration in the asylum (ch. 6). For a satirical view of the efficacy of the moral, non-restraint method of treatment, see Edgar Allan Poe's, 'The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether', in The Works of Edgar Allan Poe, Vol. 4 (London: Routledge, 1896), pp. 1-28. William Whipple, 'Poe's Two-Edged Satiric Tale', Nineteenth Century Fiction, 9 (1954-55), pp. 121-33, suggests that the narrator of the tale may also be a satire on Dickens, whose comments on asylums in America, in American Notes, had been recently published.

had been made in the treatment of patients since the hospital was first founded in 1750, and praises the high percentage of cures effected there. Although Dickens did not write the whole of this article, he obviously agreed with the sentiments in those portions which he did not write. The purpose of the article was to increase public awareness of the treatment of the insane and to rebut those critics who looked only at the failures and not the successes of such an institution.[1]

A similar purpose, together with an appeal for more public support, motivated another article, 'Idiots', in the same paper on 4 June 1853.[2] There is some doubt as to whether Dickens actually contributed to this article, but again he obviously agreed with its viewpoint. In this context, of particular interest is the need he felt, at the conclusion of the serialization of Very Hard Cash in All the Year Round, to dissociate himself from the opinions expressed by Reade:

> The statements and opinions of the Journal generally, are, of course, to be received as the statements and opinions of its conductor. But this is not so in the case of a work of fiction ... with the name of an eminent writer attached to it. When one of my literary brothers does me the honour to undertake such a task, I hold that he executes it on his own responsibility ... and I do not consider myself at liberty to exercise that control over his text which I claim as to other contributors.[3]

It was, in part, Reade's attack on the work of the Lunacy Commissioners that caused Dickens, as a friend of John Forster (who was a commissioner in 1861-72), to take this stand. The offence given to Forster in particular and Lunacy Commmissioners in general was partly atoned for by the portrayal of an energetic

1. Harry Stone (ed.), Charles Dickens: Uncollected Writings from 'Household Words', 1850-1859, Vol. 2 (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1968), pp. 382-83.
2. Stone, pp. 489-99.
3. Charles Dickens, All the Year Round, 26 December 1863 (Vol. 10 (1863-64), p. 419).

commissioner in A Terrible Temptation. But the atonement, with its play on Forster's name, must have given greater offence than it alleviated. 'Mr Fawcett was a man with a strong head and a good heart, but rather an arrogant manner. He was also affected with official pomposity and reticence ... .'[1] The intensity of Reade's reformatory zeal caused him to overlook the positive work that was being done, not only by the commissioners, but by the medical men as well.

What the debates on sanity and insanity did do was to draw attention to the complexity of the human mind, and in the novels of the period greater emphasis began to be placed on the inner working of the mind. This led to tentative studies of the mind in conflict, or of the mind undergoing some deterioration, rather than merely the presentation of a mind already deranged or the simplistic statement that a character was mad as a convenient explanation for bizarre behaviour.

Literature had its own traditional concepts of madness, whereby madness was used for 'literary' purposes that were quite distinct from, and sometimes bore little relation to, reality. Treatment of contemporary problems existed within the framework of the novel, and was not a sociological debate on aspects of madness in any depth. Even when authors claimed that social and medical anomalies were a prime motivation for their work, the value of that work lies more in its presentation of general problems and issues than as a specific (or necessarily accurate) representation of conditions as they actually existed. However, personal experience and knowledge of contemporary trends did result in a modification of the literary

1. Charles Reade, A Terrible Temptation (1871; London: Chatto & Windus, 1882), ch. 29.

traditions, particularly as the simple moral/hereditary view of causation in madness - a view that was central to much of the literary tradition - was no longer felt to be appropriate.

Dickens's interest in abnormal characters as a literary concern grew from two divergent traditions - the comic and the melodramatic. By the Victorian period, several basic uses of madness had developed in English fiction. The most obvious was the use of eccentric, semi-mad and mad characters simply as a means of providing comic relief and variety. Related to this, but rather more complex, was the use of the Idiot Figure or Holy Fool, a character whose prime function was to symbolize naive values that formed a contrast to the more worldly concerns of others. Occasionally he was used to express the 'wisdom' of fools and occasionally, too, he retained one of his historical roles, that of scapegoat. The third coventional use of madness was as a means of instilling terror and fear.

Not only had insanity assumed traditional functions, but the methods of presenting it had become conventional also. What actually constituted madness was not clearly defined in these traditions: it was regarded as self-evident. Nor was there any great concern with a medical diagnosis of specific complaints, or with the condition of the insane within asylums. The three conventions that I have outlined were to persist through the Victorian era, but as the nineteenth century progressed they became modified by the increased interest shown in the workings of the human mind and by a quasi-sociological concern for the condition of the insane. A greater realism in fictional presentation developed as a consequence of closer observation of unusual forms of human behaviour; as the rudiments of psychiatry as a discipline began

to develop; and as the treatment of the insane became part of the broad sociological concern which, by the middle of the century, was seen in terms of the question of the State of England.

The tradition that remained in its most pure form was the use of eccentric and semi-mad characters for light relief. From it the novelists inherited the idea of the English eccentric - the person whose behaviour has intrinsic comic value because of the exhibition of some habit or trait to an excessive degree. Such characters have a predictability about them after their first entrances. Some basic characteristic was used as a means of identifying one of them whenever he or she subsequently appeared in the story. It was these characters, more than any others, who used to lead critics to describe Dickens's characters as flat types or caricatures. They each exist as an exaggeration of one characteristic rather than as a complex whole. They result, in Dickens, in characters whose gestures and speech patterns are indicative of their simplicity, if indeed they are not actually simpletons. Often they are peripheral characters. They can be differentiated from figures in the Fool Tradition through the fact that they do not have the overriding symbolic status of the idiot of that tradition. They do, however, all contain elements of the grotesque.[1]

The antecedents of all these characters are quite distinct from those of the Clown. The clown was an English speciality, born, probably, of the medieval mystery plays, nurtured in Renaissance comedy, and re-established in the eighteenth-century pantomime. He became a stock character, with Joseph Grimaldi

1. On Dickens's relation to the grotesque tradition, and his use of it, see especially Michael Hollington, Dickens and the Grotesque (London: Croom Helm, 1984).

his paramount exponent in the nineteenth century.[1] The mingled grotesquerie, fun and pathos exhibited by such a character was exaggerated enough to produce a response, but did not suggest any actual madness in the clown himself. It was the mannerisms of the clown and other pantomine characters that Dickens used as a technique for depicting some of his eccentric and semi-mad characters. But unlike the demonstrative mimicry used by the stage clown, these descriptive exaggerations were meant to be indicative of the mental state of the actual character.

By the 1850s, such characters were being used to reflect serious concerns of the novel. Their function as light relief became subsidiary to the overall unity of the novel, and they became more closely integrated into the central plot or theme. From being used in the earlier novels largely for the comic situations they helped to precipitate, with occasional serious or social comment included as an aside, they began to be used as a means of posing questions or providing a variation on the main theme. Explanation of these characters was deemed necessary, rather than simple presentation. They could no longer be 'laughed off', and their mental condition was shown to be not just a quirk of character, but the result of social pressure. Once this was acknowledged, the question of responsibility was one which Dickens grappled with but did not necessarily answer.

Both the Fool and the Idiot have long been figures used in literature to develop the idea that it is the Fool who speaks truth - truth which he knows not by rationalization but by inspired instruction. As characters, their idiocy enabled them to see 'greater truths' than were discernible to the more worldly-wise,

1. Hollington, pp. 9-10.

and they revealed their perceptions by passing comments on worldly actions in which they themselves took no active part. Historically, the Fool was attached to a court and his abnormalities provided amusement for it. Because of his supposed ability to see hidden truths he was allowed a licence for criticism not permitted to the sane members of the court. He was deemed professionally mad and was dressed accordingly. The Idiot Figure, on the other hand, was what I would call the Fool's country cousin. He was abnormal with a definite impaired intellect and, while not necessarily attached to a court, he had a function similar to the Fool's. His antecedents can be found in the village idiots and Holy Fools of medieval seasonal festivals, whose folly was regarded as a sign of mysterious dedication or divine inspiration. Sometimes these fools were used as sacrificial victims and sometimes as diviners.[1]

In literature, the two figures are not always readily distinguishable from each other. However, the easily identifiable symbolic roles that had been acceptable in Renaissance plays (in, for example, Dogberry in Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing) were no longer found to be suitable for novels set in Victorian England. In earlier eras, a symbolic role was plausible since it was an extension of the role such figures played in actual life: it reflected both an actual social function in medieval and Renaissance England and the contemporary views about that function. In Victorian times, that function was no longer common and novelists began to involve such figures more closely with the central action of the plot. The function of the idiot therefore changed. Although in some cases he was a picturesque survival of an outdated fashion,

1. See Enid Welsford, The Fool: His Social and Literary History (London: Faber, 1935).

in others he became a symbol of the times, while yet in others he served in one of his earlier capacities, that of scapegoat. But in whatever role, there was a greater humanization of his qualities, with the result that his assumption of guilt was drained of symbolic meaning.

The other trend that signalled the death of the idiot figure as a convention was the progressive exploration of the differences between human minds. This led to the view that characters who would once have been regarded as distanced from humanity by virtue of their idiocy were now just another aspect of it. The idiot figure became more closely connected with everyday life of the city, and his role became upgraded from idiot to simple man, comic joker, the good hearted n'er do well. Such characters took on other attributes more clearly seen as Victorian. The innocence and purity of heart that were part of the convention remained, in that the idiot figure was unaffected by the huge pressures of society - to do well in earnest, to progress, to acquire material wealth. In this way the figure served as a means of expressing a set of values that were alternative to those dominant in Victorian society.

In Dickens's work the transformation of the idea can be seen in the characters of Barnaby Rudge (the conventional idiot figure in a novel set in the eighteenth century), Dick Swiveller and Tom Pinch, through to Sydney Carton, whose introspection - a quality alien to the original concept of the idiot figure - distances him from the tradition. Only vestiges of the idiot figure remain - basically his quality as scapegoat and misfit, and his questioning of accepted standards. Joe Gargery in Great Expectations exemplifies the other end of the idiot figure tradition. Although a simple

character and reflective of the innocence and purity of the idiot, Joe fulfils his function as a man of nineteenth-century England. His position in society is well defined, and he reflects the values of that society - he knows his social position, is hard-working, honest and sincere. The traditional idiot figure was not assimilated within the value system of his society.

From melodrama, the novelists received the tradition of using madness to exploit the horrific and Gothic aspects of the uncontrolled mind for the purpose of stimulating terror. Such a use had its antecedents in Jacobean tragedy and in the Gothic novel. As well as exciting fear in the mind of the reader, madness was also used as a type of moral warning: it became a means of doling out punishment to loose, vicious or criminal characters. The portrayal of madness in a horrific form was felt to be justified by the moral edification it entailed.

Both these aspects - the fear of the unknown, which was the basis of the Gothic presentation of madness, and the moral superimposed upon what was really included for its intrinsic horrific appeal - are evident in some of Dickens's early work; notably 'The Black Veil' and 'The Drunkard's Death' in Sketches by Boz, and 'The Madman's Manuscript' in Pickwick Papers.

'The Drunkard's Death' exemplifies this fusion of melodrama and morality. Having caused the death of his wife and two of his sons, the drunkard finally commits suicide, but not before he experiences what are to modern readers the unconvincing agonies of madness:

> Suddenly he started up, in the extremity of terror. He had heard his own voice shouting in the night air, he knew not what, or why. Hark! A groan! - another! His senses were leaving him: half-formed and incoherent words burst from his lips; and his hands sought to tear and lacerate his flesh. He was going mad, and he shrieked for help till his voice

failed him.[1]

In this description we see the language and manner of a weak convention. The groans, shrieks and lacerating of flesh are all from the repertoires of the Gothic novel and the stage melodramas of the nineteenth century. The conventionality of the concept is accentuated by the liberal use of exclamation marks and by the forced manner of the prose.

'The Madman's Manuscript' is similar in technique, but with the added horror of an attempted murder. Leonard Manheim correctly assessed its effect when he commented that its purpose was not psychological but Gothic and 'naively sadist', a story designed to give enjoyment 'by harrowing the reader's mind and giving him the same chills he would expect from a gory murder mystery'.[2] Accordingly, various elements that will heighten the 'chills' are present: gnashing of teeth, rolling round on the floor of the madhouse, the ability of the patient to hide his madness, his belief in his own cunning, the speaking in parenthesis and exclamations, and at the climax, the desire to murder his wife in the dead of the night. In the event, the madman's plot miscarries, but the wife herself goes mad and dies, and the madman, finally revealing his madness, is locked up.[3]

This crude summary does no great injustice to the tale as it seems to serve no other purpose than to invoke a feeling of horror by conventional means, a feeling offset by the comic scene that follows it. Dickens himself, however, tried to justify the tale by an explanatory note appended to the manuscript. In the

1. Charles Dickens, Sketches by Boz, Fireside Edition (1836; London: Chapman & Hall, n.d. [1903-1907]), Tale 12.
2. Manheim, 'Dickens' Fools and Madmen', p. 75.
3. Charles Dickens, The Pickwick Papers (1837; London: Oxford University Press, 1948), ch. 11.

persona of the doctor in charge of the case he wrote -

> The unhappy man whose ravings are recorded above, was a melancholy instance of the baneful results of energies misdirected in early life, and excesses prolonged until their consequences could never be repaired. The thoughtless riot, dissipation, and debauchery of his younger days, produced fever and delirium. The first effects of the latter was the strange delusion, founded upon a well-known medical theory, strongly contended for by some, and as strongly contested by others, that an hereditary madness existed in his family. This produced a settled gloom, which in time developed a morbid insanity, and finally terminated in raving madness. [Pickwick Papers, ch. 11]

With its 'wages of sin', heredity, situation psychosis, febrility, delirium, melancholia and raving lunacy, this is an example of mid-nineteenth-century psychopathology in a nutshell.[1] Most noteworthy is the moral theme of the 'wages of sin' leading through various stages of melancholia to complete insanity. What is difficult to discern is just how far Dickens himself believed in this 'wages of sin' motif. It certainly suited melodramatic fiction that the good were rewarded and the bad punished, and dissipation and debauchery were regarded as evils which, while not deserving the harshness of a prison sentence, certainly required punishment. Madness filled the gap nicely, particularly since there was a prevalent Victorian supposition that excessive sexual experience could in fact lead to madness. But the incidental way in which Dickens introduces the moral precepts into his tale shows that, for him at least, the cause of the madness was of less importance than the description of it and the atmosphere it created.

In this type of fiction, madness did not always affect only the sinner: it could also affect those near him. A popular cliché was the madness that seized fathers or other relatives of betrayed maidens, a favoured occurrence in Victorian melodramas. The feature

1. Manheim, pp. 76-77.

was adapted with subtlety by Dickens in David Copperfield, where Mr Peggotty becomes frenzied over his search for Little Em'ly but does not actually go mad.

In this melodramatic convention there was no serious attempt to explore character: madness was being used either as a convenient explanation of motives or simply for its capacity to create suspense. Dickens did not much exploit this melodramatic type of madness. In his later novels the element is there, but it is integrated with his more complex views on crime. Exploitation of the theme was largely in the hands of sensation novelists such as Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade, writers whom Dickens influenced rather than followed.

Gothic novelists had presented areas of experience that were traditionally taboo, and chose settings that were remote and unfamiliar. Madness in such a setting had a twofold function. In the first instance it provided the writers with a means of depicting the unfamiliar and the irrational, and secondly it could be used as a means of punishment for transgressors. The sensationalists used madness in a similar fashion. The asylum was a place from which horror and fear could be produced, inhibitions relaxed, and unconventional behaviour exploited. The typical locales of the classical Gothic novel were transformed into representations of actual social institutions of the time - mansions, prisons and asylums. Madness and the supernatural, long established as Gothic material, continue through the short stories of Sheridan Le Fanu and others, becoming central to the development of the horror story as a modern genre.

This form of exploitation of the macabre was camouflaged by the novelists' ostensible concern with the asylum system and

the lunacy laws. Controversy surrounded both the methods by which a person could be declared insane and the social and legal status of such a person. The controversy erupted periodically throughout the century as allegations of illegal confinement were brought to the public's attention, sometimes through articles in newspapers and occasionally from ex-inmates alleging illegal confinement and describing the treatment they had received while in an asylum. Nowadays, J.T. Perceval is perhaps the best remembered of such inmates, not only because his book Perceval's Narrative: A Patient's Account of His Psychosis, 1830-1832 was reprinted in 1962,[1] but also because he played a central part in the formation of the Alleged Lunatics' Friends Society in 1845. This society actively sought out cases of illegal confinement and brought these to the attention of the relevant authorities, sometimes making their cases widely known. W.L. Parry-Jones sees Perceval's contribution to the awakening of public consciousness as an important one:

> Despite the paranoid vehemence of his writings ... his aims were more far-reaching than those of other alleged lunatics who published accounts of their cases. His objectives were the reform of lunacy law, particularly with regard to the protection of insane patients in asylums, and the reform of the management of lunatic asylums. In addition, he hoped to be able to educate relatives of deranged persons so that they might avoid the errors which, he claimed, had been committed by his own family.[2]

Revelations such as Perceval's aroused public concern for the treatment of the insane in private asylums, and the concern was heightened by the continued secrecy that surrounded these institutions. This secrecy had developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and was in marked contrast to earlier times

1. Gregory Bateson (ed.), Perceval's Narrative: A Patient's Account of his Psychosis, 1830-1832 (London: Hogarth Press, 1962). On the most notable of these publications by ex-inmates, see Parry-Jones, The Trade in Lunacy, pp. 222-42.
2. Parry-Jones, The Trade in Lunacy, p. 231.

when idiots and lunatics had been left at liberty so long as they were not considered dangerous and caused no great social disturbance.[1] In the nineteenth century such secrecy led to the suspicion that the managers of asylums were motivated more by financial gain than by concern for their patients.

Public outcry over the issue encouraged reformers such as Lord Ashley and Lord Shaftesbury to question the adequacy of lunacy laws and advocate greater official control over what occurred in asylums, both public and private. Their work led to the formation of various select committees to inquire into such matters,[2] and to the appointment of fifteen Metropolitan commissioners who became, in 1845, a Board of Commissioners in Lunacy. Their duty was to inquire into and inspect the various asylums throughout the country and to make annual reports about the care of the insane and the treatment of their property. The reports of these men, together with pressure from activists' groups, resulted in various Acts of Parliament which were passed in the hope that greater consistency and regulation could be achieved.[3]

As a public issue, the asylum system and the inadequacy of the lunacy laws provided the sensationalist novelists with what they regarded as a legitimate purpose - the exposure of the defects of the system - with which to justify their often melodramatic plots. But in this their reformatory purpose came into conflict with their literary method. Novelists soon realised

1. See Foucault, especially ch. 2, 'The Great Confinement', pp. 38-64.
2. In the period under study here, these were set up in 1815, 1816, 1827, 1828, 1839, 1859, 1860, and 1877-78.
3. During Dickens's lifetime, fifteen Acts of Parliament, or amendments to existing Acts, were passed on the issue of insanity and asylums. On this legislation, see Tuke, pp. 147-203 and Parry-Jones, The Trade in Lunacy, pp. 6-28, 331-32. For previous legislation, see Tuke, pp. 97-112.

that they could create suspense through using the asylum as a place for putting their sane hero or heroine in peril. Their reformatory purpose, consequently, tended to be limited to exposing the iniquity of the lunacy laws rather than airing the question of insanity and the asylum system as a whole. Charles Reade was perhaps an exception, but then he attacked everything.

Concern with the exploration of unusual states of mind was not restricted to the sensationalists or those espousing a reformatory cause. Exploration of a mind in conflict became of interest in and for itself. Of course, this did not always involve a concept of madness, but it often resulted in characters who were portrayed as verging on it.

Initially, such interest was aroused through the desire to depict the criminal mind. This had its antecedents partly in confession pamphlets and partly in the dénouements of Gothic novels. The words of the condemned man on his last night, and the confessions of a tortured mind, were motifs from the Gothic novel which were subsequently exploited both by pamphleteers offering ostensible confessions of real criminals and by Victorian novelists with their fictional criminals. The interest in such events was akin to the interest and delight shown in public hangings. In the Victorian novel, interest in the criminal mind began to be explored by the Newgate novelists, of whose work Edward Lytton's Eugene Aram and William Ainsworth's Rookwood and Jack Sheppard are typical, and gained prominence in the work of Charles Reade and Wilkie Collins as well as Dickens.

In Dickens's earlier novels, criminals were easily recognisable by their unpleasant physical appearance, which was indicative

of their mental and moral outlooks. Sikes, Fagin and Rudge are physical grotesques. Animal metaphors form a central part of Dickens's descriptions of them and their activities. They live in physical squalor and either prey on their fellow man or are hunted by him. Their physical existence de-humanizes them and they are shown as verging on madness as a result of their criminal way of life. Again, with increasing concern for realism in the later novels, the potentiality for both madness and crime is shown to be beneath the surface of seemingly respectable, everyday characters. The madness in these characters is part of the cause of their crime and not simply a result of it. The simple moralistic view of madness as a retribution was therefore undermined. This development can be seen in Jonas Chuzzlewit (in whom traces of the retributive theme remain), Bradley Headstone and John Jasper. Although Dickens still regarded such characters as having a separate way of thinking from that of non-criminals, he did not make this immediately apparent by his physical descriptions of them. Instead, they are shown as basically leading a double life, so they represent a development of the concept of the double as a means of revealing a dual aspect of personality.

While these characters were regarded as an isolated type of person because of their desires to commit crimes, and while they receive little more sympathy than did the earlier easily-recognisable villains, Dickens makes a conscious attempt to understand and explain (but not excuse) their way of thinking. The effect was to accelerate the concentration of the novel on the inward thinking of characters - a move towards introversion, with less reliance on overt action.

Simultaneously with, and in part as a result of, studying madness in 'the criminal mind', Dickens progressed to a sympathetic portrayal of madness in the non-criminal mind. From his observations he began to see madness as a result of societal pressure and environmental conditions. Insane characters became symbols for the individual alienated from society; a society which demanded conformity to a particular pattern of behaviour. These characters, in the main, are shown as becoming mad, not through their rejection of society and societal values (which is, after all, the prime underlying feature in criminals), but because of their attempts to live within its structure and their increasing failure to do so. An interest therefore developed in the mental state itself, and hence an interest in insanity.

Involvement in any number of social institutions or response to social pressures could result in mental unbalance, particularly when it created an obsession - with the law (Richard Carstone, Miss Flite, The Man from Shropshire), with the debtors' prisons (Mr Dorrit), with false imprisonment (Dr Manette), with marriage (Miss Havisham), and with sexual repression (Miss Wade), though it is not explicity called that. The question of the extent to which the madness of such characters was caused by their contact with society, as distinct from being the result of individual perversity in relation to it, was one that, by the early 1850s, engaged Dickens's attention.

Dickens, as well as other authors, moved from a fairly 'standard' presentation - with conventional assignation of cause - to a much subtler view. It was no longer felt to be sufficient to account for extreme irrationality by the simple explanation of hereditary madness, though this explanation continued to be

used in the works of lesser sensationalists where it effectively resolves the plot and by-passes the question of individual responsibility, as in Lady Audley's Secret. Where authors did question the relationship between the individual and society - a relationship that sometimes resulted in the breaking of the individual - they began to perceive the relation as a more complex one. From seeing character as the result of either intrinsic characteristics or environmental conditioning, they began to view the final formation of character as the result of both. Thus, whereas the outward evils of bad education and inhumane treatment are offered as the sole reasons for Smike's retardation in Nicholas Nickleby, in Little Dorrit the experience of the debtors' prison is only part of the cause of Mr Dorrit's delusions. Much of the cause lies in his own personality.

Society was, nevertheless, held partly responsible for the madness within it. The study of a psychosis was interesting not in itself, but rather for what it provided as a reflection of general themes and symbols in the novels. It led to a new concept of the role of madness in literature. Because of its basis in real contemporary ills, madness could be used to expose the evils or shortcomings of contemporary life; so for Dickens it provided a means whereby he could underscore his social attacks.

The study of the irrational in character not only helped the thematic structure of the novels but also helped to deepen the understanding of character and motivation. The beginnings of such interest are evident in the extent to which Dickens describes the psychotic state of some of his characters. In Little Dorrit, for example, not only is there the extensive portrayal

of Mr Dorrit's delusions, but there are also the shorter studies of Mrs Clennam's religious mania and Miss Wade's masochism. Such an interest was not peculiar to this novel: it occurred in varying degrees in all Dickens's later novels.

From all this, four main purposes are evident: comic, moral, sensational and the study of character. There are also some traces of the frightening and horrific nature of some madmen. Dickens was not much concerned (at least in his novels) with the treatment of the insane, except for the isolated comments in David Copperfield where Miss Betsey claims that she will look after Mr Dick and not ill-treat him as his relations and the asylum folk had done.[1] The issue was largely a by-product of the sensational novel, and it is seen more clearly in the works of Reade, Collins and Le Fanu than in Dickens.

What the variety discernible in the Victorian novel in general and in Dickens in particular led to was a breaking down of conventional attitudes toward cause and effect of madness. The difficulty was, however, that unconventional attitudes existed side by side with conventional exploitation of themes, sometimes within the same novel. Despite this inconsistency, however, literary use of the conventions did become redirected. First, there was an appreciation of different ways of perception. These the authors regarded as providing an alternative perspective on reality rather than simply being a negation of it. They also tackled the problem of the consequences of such perceptions, consequences which the Romantics had largely ignored because they saw only the liberating effects of escape from reality. Increasingly, as the nineteenth

1. Charles Dickens, David Copperfield (1850; London: Oxford University Press, 1948), ch. 14.

century went on, interest was shown in non-logical thought patterns that could be developed in symbolic and thematic patterns to reveal the relationship of an individual to society - something that was not possible in straightforward narrative presentation or through conventional dialogue. The thought processes previously associated only with mad people, and therefore largely ignored or conventionalised, were no longer so easily cataloguable. Irrational thought processes could and did exist in everyone, and an understanding of these irrational tendencies was fundamental to a deeper understanding of character. Ultimately, this shift in perspective was to lead to the introspective psychological novel in the late nineteenth century and the stream-of-consciousness novels of the early twentieth.

Related to this change was the change in critical emphasis to condemn the society that caused madness rather than the individual who suffered from it. When madness was seen as the result of personal dissipation or immorality the question of society's responsibility was one which remained largely unasked. But as aetiology came to be seen as less a matter of individuals, madness came to be emblematic of social problems generally and often as consequent upon them rather than as indicative of isolated personal perversity. This change in attitude cannot be precisely located within any specific time: it often co-existed with older attitudes, and there was no clearly defined development in this thinking, though as the century progressed the newer attitudes emerged more frequently. In extreme form (one not found in Dickens) such attitudes led to the view that madness was the only means of survival in a world that had itself gone mad. There are traces of this attitude in Bleak House - in the eccentricity of John Jarndyce, the anger of

the man from Shropshire, and the madness of Miss Flite. But Dickens ultimately sides with the rational middle-class values of Esther Summerson and Allan Woodcourt, whose personal 'survival' is hardly a solution to the overriding problems presented in the novel.

On the whole, authors were not concerned with solutions to the problems of madness, except in so far as the sensation novelists consciously strove to reveal the dilemmas and controversies surrounding aslylums. But the methods of assigning individuals to asylums, and their treatment thereafter, engaged the attention of novelists. In this way they reflected widespread social and legal concerns, and their novels were occasionally a form of propaganda for reformist ideas. With increasing concern for environmental effects on mental health, and increasing interest in how the mind worked, novelists began to explore these problem areas. In so doing, they showed the difficulty of distinguishing between 'madness' and insanity; questioned the nature of reality, and the degree to which a person could be regarded as abnormal without being institutionalised; and began to explore the realm of the subconscious. All these features became part of the means whereby Dickens and other novelists portrayed character, highlighted thematic structures and resolved their plots.

CHAPTER II

CONVENTION OF THE IDIOT FIGURE: 'BARNABY RUDGE'

In Barnaby Rudge Dickens deals with madness on several levels and in various different forms. Most obvious, of course, is his use of Barnaby, the simple idiot, as a major character of the novel. That Barnaby was meant to be a central concern is clear from the fact that Dickens changed the title of the book from 'Gabriel Varden, The Locksmith of London' to Barnaby Rudge. Yet critics have been reluctant to accept Barnaby as a central character and some have treated the novel as though Gabriel were the unifying force. Others have given some some passing attention to Barnaby and then discussed the themes of the novel with very little reference to him.

But one must assume that Dickens changed the title for some intelligible reason - perhaps he saw Barnaby as central to the purposes of the novel. It is just this that has disturbed the many critics who have found his character and function insufficient to hold the reader's attention. The criticisms are numerous and varied, but basically they derive from three propositions. The first was summed up by Edgar Johnson when he claimed that one of this novel's defects is a clumsy, broken-backed plot, with which the feeble-witted Barnaby, its central character, has no organic connection.[1]

The second, and most prevalent, criticism is that Barnaby lacks realism as a character. Andrew Sanders expresses this view

1. Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph, Vol. 1 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1952), p. 330.

when he states that Barnaby is never really alive enough. He feels that the attempts to show Barnaby's child-like qualities hover near bathos, that his involvement in the riots, though intended to show us an innocent exploited, is spoilt by the quality of the victim, and that 'Barnaby is so often mute, or able to express himself only in snatches, that his rare moments of coherence seem mawkish and unreal'.[1] The charges of lack of realism have ranged from over-sentimentality[2] to outright fantasy.[3] Perhaps the most sympathetic appraisal of this lack of realism was that of Jack Lindsay, who believed that Dickens tried to return to the Shakespearean Fool, but that the folk tradition in which it was embedded was inappropriate. As a result Barnaby, and Gordon, lacked the realistic basis of Scott's fools; especially since Dickens makes them carry a far greater philosophical burden.[4]

The dual nature of this presentation led Lindsay to see a symbolic value in Barnaby, but he also found Barnaby unsatisfactory as a symbol. The folk fool, who is prophet and liberator, while a potent symbol in the medieval world and therefore available for the tragic universe of Shakespeare loses much of his 'magic' in the world of developing industrialism and is unable to carry all the weight of meaning that the fable demands.[5] This use of

1. Andrew Sanders, The Victorian Historical Novel, 1840-1880 (London: Macmillan Press, 1978), p. 81.
2. For example, H.F. Folland, 'The Doer and the Deed: Theme and Pattern in Barnaby Rudge', P.M.L.A., 74 (1959), pp. 406-17. Folland found Barnaby a disappointing sentimentalized character until he is drawn into the riots, when he gathers symbolic force (p.410).
3. For example, Harry Stone, Dickens and the Invisible World (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 88, claims that Barnaby and his raven are fantastical, and that aspects of their conception are opposed to the realistic drift of the story.
4. Jack Lindsay, 'Barnaby Rudge', in Dickens and the Twentieth Century, ed. John Gross and Gabriel Pearson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 95.
5. Lindsay, 'Barnaby Rudge', p. 104.

Barnaby as a symbol is the third feature in Dickens's portrayal that critics have found unsatisfactory. John Lucas, for example, felt that for a central character, Barnaby was 'too obviously a reductive symbol of the chaotic forces that may be let loose once order is abandoned.'[1] Thus discontent with Barnaby's character arises from both his presentation and purpose.

What most critics have acknowledged is that Barnaby has elements of the stock simpleton found in literature since at least the middle ages.[2] A review of this tradition will show that while Dickens did draw on the convention of the fool figure, he superimposed other ideas on it and, in giving a wider scope to the fool-figure's function, extended the use of it.

Perhaps it is best to start with Shakespeare as an exponent of the received tradition of the fool in Elizabeth times. Shakespeare inherited two distinct traditions regarding the fool: the Tommy Fool of medieval festivals and the Court Fool.

1. John Lucas, The Melancholy Man: A Study of Dickens's Novels (London: Methuen, 1970), p. 102.
2. On the origins and types of fool in literature, particularly in the medieval, Elizabethan and Jacobean period, see especially Enid Welsford, The Fool: His Social and Literary History (London: Faber, 1935), and also Robert Armin, A Nest of Ninnies (1608; repr. in Fools and Jesters, ed. J.P. Collier (London: Shakespeare Society, 1842)), and P.H. Goldsmith, Wise Fools in Shakespeare (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1958). Some critics have attributed to Dickens's concept of Barnaby, specific influences from the fool tradition. For example, Shakespeare: Steven Marcus, 'Barnaby Rudge: Sons and Fathers', in Dickens: Modern Judgements, ed. A.E. Dyson (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 99; and M.R. Ryan, 'Dickens and Shakespeare: Probable Sources of Barnaby Rudge', English, 19 (1970), pp. 43-44. Wordsworth: Marcus, p. 99; Sanders, p. 81; and Dyson, p. 150. Walter Scott, Waverley : John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson, Dickens at Work (London: Methuen, 1957), p. 78, who also note that the parallel was remarked upon as early as June 1841, in Patrick Robertson's speech at an Edinburgh banquet. Scott, The Heart of Midlothian: George Gissing, Critical Studies of the Works of Charles Dickens, rev. ed. (1898; New York: Haskell House, 1963), p. 109; and Butt and Tillotson, p. 78. The general influence of Scott

The Tommy or Fool as part of medieval festivals and the plays of the mummers was a folk fool, although he sometimes played the part of sacrificial victim. His role was not necessarily central; he was part of the entourage of the protagonist, or he stood detached from and 'outside' the performance. This involved a link between folly and mysterious dedication.

> The madman is not always regarded as an object of commiseration. On the contrary, there is a widespread notion which is not yet extinct that the lunatic is an awe-inspiring figure whose reason has ceased to function normally because he has become the mouthpiece of a spirit, or power external to himself, and so has access to hidden knowledge ....[1]

It is the remnant of this tradition that finds its way into the treatment of Edgar as Poor Tom in King Lear. By then, the fool of this type was regarded as an object of commiseration, in so far as he had lost the place he held in medieval society and had become an outcast and beggar. Edgar, when deciding to adopt the form of Tom-o'-Bedlam, explains the basic characteristics of that character:

> I will preserve myself; and am bethought
> To take the basest and most poorest shape
> That ever penury, in contempt of man,
> Brought near to beast; my face I'll grime with filth,
> Blanket my loins, elf all my hairs in knots,
> And with presented nakedness out-face
> The winds, and persecutions of the sky;
> The country gives me proof and precedent
> Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,
> Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms
> Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary:
> And with this horrible object, from low farms,
> Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes and mills
> Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,
> Enforce their charity ....[2]

on the conception of Barnaby has been noted by most critics. Victorian melodrama: Lindsay, p. 95. E.B. Lytton, Night and Morning: Lindsay, pp. 95-96.

1. Welsford, p. 76. The comments on the folk fool are derived from Chapters III and IV of Miss Welsford's book, which treat the phenomenon in detail. The belief that a spirit possessed a lunatic was, of course, open to interpretation as to whether it was a good or bad spirit, and many mad folk were condemned as witches.

It is evident that such a description is based on living examples of Shakespeare's time. The basic characteristics are disordered dress (near-nakedness in this case), unkempt appearance, uncontrolled actions, cries and poverty. Poor Tom is described as close to man in his natural state, which is in fact close to man as an animal, so much so that it leads Lear to the conclusion that 'unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art' (III.4).

The second tradition was the court fool, who is quite distinct from the Tommy Fool but has superficial resemblances in dress and behaviour.[1] These fools were often court jesters, distinguished by their 'motley' clothes, their apparent simplicity, and their licence to speak more freely than other members of the court before their masters. As such the fool often becomes a critic of the society around him and a disguised truth-teller, as is Touchstone in As You Like It or Lavatch in All's Well that Ends Well; or he provides a contrast between professional fools and the actually foolish, as do Feste in Twelfth Night, the fool in King Lear, and Trinculo in The Tempest. In each of the plays the fool serves as a moral guide to action, raising the issues of what is madness and what is sanity or which of several viewpoints is the most reasonable one.[2] He thus attains a symbolic value in literature.

In King Lear there are elements of both the folk fool and the courtly fool. The qualities of both are simplicity, loyalty, unusual dress, relative freedom of movement, and a type of intuitive

2. Shakespeare, King Lear, ed. Kenneth Muir (1608; London: Methuen, 1952). II.3.6-20.

1. On this type of fool, see Welsford, chs. X and XI.
2. In the case of King Lear, the whole relationship of the Fool, King Lear, Kent and Edgar as Tom-o'-Bedlam is extremely complex, as is their relationship to the play as a whole, on which see especially Welsford, pp. 253-70.

wisdom. Of these qualities, all but the last occurs in Barnaby, in whom Dickens finds pathos, tenderness and tragic truth, but no wisdom. We are not offered the paradox of wisdom in the fool.[1] This, of course, depends on what type of wisdom one is looking for. Barnaby does in fact have a highly imaginative perception, as when he sees human attributes in his shadow, and in the clothes on the line.[2] He has a different approach to reality from the usual, but in worldly wisdom he is singularly lacking.

The ability to see things from a different perspective, seen to be a characteristic of fools, was admired by the Romantic poets. They saw the lack of inhibition that came with madness as making the individual more receptive to natural phenomena. In 'The Affliction of Margaret', Wordsworth shows Margaret in her apprehensive state responding to the movements of nature as she waits for news of her son whom she has misguidedly encouraged to seek worldly grandeur.[3] So too, Johnny, in 'The Idiot Boy', enjoys the simple pleasures of riding at night and listening to the owls. He is oblivious to the passing of time, and is content to linger from eight o'clock until five. In the same poem Wordsworth displays the love the mother has for her son (as does neighbour Susan also) even though he is 'half-witted'. Idiocy is not seen as a problem in itself. The mother's fears for Johnny are those she would feel for anyone, although they are heightened by a knowledge of his incapacity.

1. Dyson, p. 152.
2. Charles Dickens, Barnaby Rudge, ed. Gordon Spence (1841; Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1973), chs. 6 and 10 respectively.
3. William Wordsworth, The Poetical Works, ed. T. Hutchinson, rev. E. de Selincourt (1904; London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 92. Other poems by Wordsworth are also from this edition: 'The Idiot Boy', p. 100; 'Ruth', p. 152; and 'Her Eyes are Wild', p. 115.

In 'Ruth' Wordsworth introduces the concept of madness as a result of forsaken love; but even in her prison Ruth has an imaginative freedom:

> Nor wanted sun, nor rain, nor dew,
> Nor pastimes of the May;
> They all were with her in her cell....(11. 200-02)

After leaving prison, Ruth lives on the land and leads a simplified existence close to nature, as do the mother and child in 'Her Eyes are wild'. Although they are forced by circumstances to live a beggarly, wandering life, there is no real rebellion in these characters; they seem content in the simplicity of their existence. This has a lot to do with Romantic idealisation - there is a cult of the idyllic setting in which man is free from over-sophistication and can feel at one with Nature. In 'Ruth' we do hear of some deprivation caused by this type of existence, when we hear that Ruth will be old and broken 'long before her day' and that her body suffers from 'damp and rain and cold'. But such images are soon replaced by that of Ruth cheering herself by playing the flute.

Such a pastoral setting and such love of mother and idiot son become part of Dickens's portrayal of Barnaby and his mother. Barnaby wanders freely over the countryside, he 'comes and goes, through wind, rain, snow, and hail, and on the darkest nights. Nothing hurts <u>him</u>' (ch. 10). Dickens makes much of this freedom of movement as well as the lightness of spirit evident in it. In the walk to Chigwell - a walk prompted by the appearance of Rudge, which has disturbed the simple existence of mother and son - Barnaby is carefree in his wanderings; and being unaware of the cause of the flight, he provides a contrast to the widow who toils heavily and wearily along.

> It is something to look upon enjoyment, so that it be free and wild and in the fact of nature, though it is but the enjoyment of an idiot. It is something to know that Heaven has left the capacity of gladness in such a creature's breast; it is something to be assured that, however lightly men may crush that faculty in their fellows, the Great Creator of Mankind imparts it even to his despised and slighted work. Who would not rather see a poor idiot happy in the sunlight, than a wise man pining in a darkened jail! [ch. 25]

Freedom, happiness, simplicity and light are thus all linked, together with the concept that wisdom does not necessarily lead to happiness. At Chigwell, the simplicity of their existence continues until the arrival of Stagg once again disrupts their routine: it is Stagg who implants in Barnaby's mind the idea that gold is to be found among crowds in the city, thereby destroying Barnaby's simplicity and basic innocence.

Steven Marcus believes that there is no relief in this idyllic vision of life - Barnaby is only capable of realizing it because of his defects; he is rejuvenated by nature only because he lives outside time and has no memory, so that all experience comes to him afresh. Dickens makes it 'perfectly clear that Barnaby can envision these happy scenes only because his senses are unable to encompass actuality'.[1] In so far as Marcus sees this world as threatened by that of actuality he is correct, for Stagg does indeed impinge upon the purity of their existence; but in asserting that Barnaby can enjoy this type of world only because of his defects, I feel that he is interpreting a point on which I am not confident that Dicken is 'perfectly clear'. Is it not rather that we, by virtue of our defects - an over-developed sense of the material world and material gains, together with a slavish dependence on social normality and an over-systematisation of

1. Marcus, pp. 100-01.

life - have lost the ability to see such a world?[1] The quotation from Barnaby Rudge above, by its very rhetorical and didactic tone, sufficiently illustrates my point, particularly with its implication that in some cases the idiot can be better off than a wise man.

On a general level, Barnaby exhibits several important aspects of a romantic hero: spontaneity, vigour, a touching heroism and loyalty.[2] This invites comparison with Scott, who as an immediate predecessor of Dickens, used the idiot figure in some of his works, thereby transplanting a concept that had been essentially a poetic and dramatic one into the novel form.

Scott's treatment of Davie Gellatly in Waverley is at once a revival of the Shakespearean treatment of the fool and a variation on it. When Edward first meets Davie he is struck by 'the oddity of his appearance and gestures.'[3] Both appearance and gesture are extravagant. He swings his arms or claps them on his head and he hops on his right or left foot or both. His clothing is both outmoded and colourful:

> It consisted in a sort of grey jerkin, with scarlet cuffs and slash'd sleeves, shewing a scarlet lining; the other parts of the dress corresponded in colour, not forgetting a pair of scarlet stockings, and a scarlet bonnet, proudly surmounted with a turkey's feather. [I.9]

His features confirm the superficial appearance of clothing and gesture:

1. I am not being anachronistic. This was true for the Victorian reader as it is for us today. It is a theme that concerned Dickens in various forms in all his writing. The pursuit of wealth in defiance of feeling in Dombey and Son and the pursuit of fact in defiance of feeling and imagination in Hard Times are the two most completely developed examples.
2. Dyson, p. 150.
3. Walter Scott, Waverley, ed. Claire Lamont (1814; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), I.9.

> It was apparently neither idiocy nor insanity which gave that wild, unsettled, irregular expression to a face which naturally was rather handsome, but something that resembled a compound of both, where the simplicity of the fool was mixed with the extravagance of a crazed imagination. [I.9]

His clothing, look, gestures and outbursts of song cause Edward to liken him to 'one of Shakespeare's roguish clowns'. On further enquiry the gardener comments on his fidelity, and the butler sees him as an innocent, albeit indulged due to his past service to Rose. This, and his attachment to the Baron's household - itself a relic of feudal allegiances - further point in the direction of the Shakespearean courtly fool; and Scott himself, in a note at the end of Book I, chapter 9 spoke of the custom, by his own time disused, of keeping fools. Even though, as Welsford mentions, the custom of keeping fools at the king's court had ceased in England after the reign of Charles I, the attachment to noble houses continued longer; and as Scott points out in his note was still prevalent at the historical time of the novel and even later: he cites an example from 'not above thirty years since' (c. 1775). The novel was set 'sixty years since' (c. 1745).

Davie is also characterised by love of animals and music, and a loyalty tinged with that peculiar and distinctive loyalty to the clan characteristic of the Highland Scot throughout recorded history. Thus he was attached to those who showed him kindness, but also aware of any ill usage or slight and sufficiently apt, where he saw an opportunity, to avenge it (I.9). Such feelings add a further dimension to Davie's character. He is more than the stock conventional character that Edward at first takes him to be. In fact, his ability in certain areas is capable of misconstruction, and the common people do misconstrue it. Scott

exposes contradictory and almost hypocritical attitudes when he points out that people compassionate for Davie while he was suffered to wander in rags about the village,

> no sooner beheld him decently clothed, provided for, and even a sort of favourite, than they called up all the instances of sharpness and ingenuity ... and charitably bottomed thereupon a hypothesis, that Davie Gellatly was no farther fool than was necessary to avoid hard labour. [I.12]

Scott thus reveals a thinking concern for the plight of such people as Davie, and an understanding of people's general attitude to them. They are still seen as outside society and this has its problems, since they are sometimes judged by their failure to adhere to social 'norms'. Scott, like the other Romantics, does not himself regard their condition as a problem, but he does not idealize their state. Davie is shown as dependent on the goodwill and prosperity of the Baron for his comfortable existence. Ironically, when the Baron's fortunes are at their lowest, he in turn is shown as dependent on Davie and his mother for survival.

Scott is at some pains to be precise about Davie's condition, and not only refutes the common people's view, but also shows him to be more complex than a stock character of convention:

> Davie Gellatly was in good earnest the half-crazed simpleton which he appeared, and was incapable of any constant and steady exertion. He had just so much solidity as kept on the windy side of insanity; so much wild wit as saved him from the imputation of idiocy .... [I.12]

There is a consciousness on Scott's part that ordinary labels such as 'idiot' are not appropriate or sufficient to explain Davie's condition, and an awareness that a simple label does not express any person's total condition.

Worse than the belief that idiocy was just an excuse for those who wished to be idle was the imputation of a moral judgement having fallen on the family of an idiot. The superstitious Scots

of the time of the novel suspected that Janet Gellatly was a witch.

> on the infallible grounds that she was very old, very ugly, very poor, and had two sons, one of whom was a poet, and the other a fool, which visitation, all the neighbourhood agreed, had come upon her for the sin of witchcraft.[1] [I.13]

The presentation of Davie is integrally embedded in the Scotland of which Scott writes. As part of the Baron's household he performs useful duties of caring for the dogs, of providing light entertainment, and of bearing messages. In the latter capacity he is particularly effective in taking a message to Edward in the fortress of Ian nan Chaistel (II.5). Because of his condition, Davie is able to move about the countryside in the troubled times of civil war without being seriously questioned, and he is simple enough to indulge in spontaneous dancing which diverts attention from the real purpose of his mission. Later we hear how Davie had helped the Baron to escape his pursuers (III.17), and was 'constantly on the watch to discover and avert danger' (III.18). It is in the hovel that has become the Baron's hide-out that Scott stresses the relationship betwen Janet and Davie, and consciously echoes Wordsworth by his reference to 'Him, whom she loved, her idiot boy'.

Being attached to the Baron's household, Davie suffers when that household is ruined; his 'whimsical finery' becomes tattered and in place of his vacant and careless expression, he looks 'hollow-eyed, meagre, half-starved, and nervous to a pitiable degree' (III.16). When the Baron's fortunes improve, Davie's do also; he resumes his former appearance, and is decked out in clothes that were fine enough to have served Touchstone himself' (III.24).

1. It is clear from Scott's presentation that he himself did not hold this view. On the supposed link between moral depravity and insanity, see Foucault, pp. 85-92.

Thus Scott used the stock concept of the fool attached to a noble household but gave him some individuality and a peculiarly Scottish flavour. Davie's function in the novel, however, is far more traditional. He remains outside the action. He tends not to focus on events but dissolve them - he relaxes tensions by being in a more carefree state than others. Despite his reduced circumstances and ragged appearance, he is essentially the same character in adversity as in good fortune. Moreover, we are never given a close-up of Davie's feelings as we are with say, Edward. We may feel sorry for Davie, but we do so at a distance; appropriately enough, for he is not on centre stage in the drama. Although Davie possesses a degree of cunning he does not possess the wisdom of the fools in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, and he does not therefore fulfil the function of providing a different viewpoint. Davie is in fact a colourful figure in the mass of background detail essential to establishing the setting of Scott's story; but he is not integral to the development of Scott's plot or theme.

The combination of the Shakespearean type of fool and persons localised in Scottish tradition recurs in Madge Wildfire in The Heart of Midlothian. Like Davie Gellatly, she has strange clothes, wild looks, extravagent gestures; she sings snatches of songs, and she roams freely - all of which would suggest that we are in for a stock type. But there is a terrifying aspect about Madge and an element of uncontrollability that was absent in Davie. Her appearance and manner is provocative and at times offensive, and her sudden outbursts of laughter and shifts of mood are more pathetic, frightening and dangerous than those of the simple fool. In his presentation, Scott combines elements from the Gothic

tradition (elements he was to also use in such novels as The Bride of Lammermoor and St. Ronan's Well) with those of the conventional fool figure.[1]

In general, Madge lacks the simplicity and innocence of the usual pastoral fool. It was the loss of her innocence and subsequently of her child that had in fact caused her derangement.[2] It is not clear whether Scott saw Madge's suffering as the result of her moral sin (the prevalent view that loss of virtue led to madness was to be exploited in the more sensational works of the Victoran era) or as a result of the physical act of childbirth. Nevertheless, the assignation of a cause to madness modifies the concept of Madge as a fool figure: her 'madness' is not innate, but rather the result of circumstances. It is further modified by Scott's attempt to present the viewpoint of Madge about her condition. Her lucid moments give us a closer view of her thoughts and feelings.[3] We are no longer at the aesthetic distance we were with Davie Gellatly. We are made to identify with the feelings of Madge and through this partial identification we lose the security of the earlier perspective which left the fool at a distance from ourselves.

This 'humanization' of the fool is enhanced by Scott's use of Madge's story as a parallel to that of Effie. Madge's fate

1. Scott also claimed, in a note on Madge Wildfire when she dies, that Madge was loosely modelled on a real person, Feckless Fannie, who roamed England and Scotland between 1767 and 1775, and he recounts the story of that person.
2. Scott, The Heart of Midlothian (1818; New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1967), chs. 30, 33. Although, at times, Madge herself sees her lunacy in demonological terms as 'my auld acquaintance with th devil', her final fate at the hands of 'a parcel of savage-looking fellows' who believe her guilty of witchcraft (ch. 40) is clearly undeserved, and serves to highlight the ignorance that then surrounded insanity.
3. See especially, chs. 30, 31, 32, and 40.

shows one of the possible consequences of succumbing to the charms of a man like Robertson. Nevertheless, it is not a crude piece of preaching on the level of 'behave like Madge and you will go mad.'[1] Effie does not go mad, primarily because she had the upbringing that had given her the strength of character to enable her to withstand the efffect of a disaster similar to Madge's but worse in its consequences.[2]

Scott's use of Madge is therefore not merely as a stock romantic property. She is more integrally related to the plot of the novel than was Davie Gellatly, whose position in Waverley was largely peripheral. She is central to the sub-plot and strongly connected to the main plot. Moreover, she serves more than the simple needs of plot construction; her story complements that of Effie and broadens our moral perspective, not only in relation to Effie, but in relation to the overall theme of moral responsibility for one's actions and the need to clearly envisage the consequences of those actions, both on oneself and others, together with the relationship between such qualities as justice and mercy, and love and truth.[3]

1. In a different way, Scott deals with love and madness in The Bride of Lammermoor and St. Ronans Well, but in those cases it is not allied to the stock fool tradition.
2. P.F. Fisher, 'Providence, Fate and the Historical Imagination in Scott's The Heart of Midlothian', in Walter Scott: Modern Judgements, ed. D.D. Devlin (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 108. D.D. Brown, Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 126, finds the whole parallel between Effie and Madge too strained to be credible. I do not agree with this. Both Effie and Madge succumb to Robertson's charms, so their reactions to similar occurrences provide an effective thematic parallel.
3. I realize that this is an over-simplification of Scott's purpose, but feel that a detailed study of his themes and the controversy over them would be out of place here. For a cross-section of views, see D.D. Brown, pp. 112-28; Fisher, pp. 98-111; and Robin Mayhead, 'The Heart of Midlothian: Scott as an Artist', in Devlin, pp. 112-21.

In terms of presentation, by assigning a cause to her madness and by giving us glimpses of the way she feels, Scott makes her more understandable and more of a real person than the stock literary fool, even though she retains some of the characteristics of that tradition. This creates a tension of perspective - she is no longer firmly linked to the abstract concept of the fool, nor is she idealized in the sense of the Romantic poets. Her freedom is not the freedom that brings peace, but rather the freedom that hides a sense of guilt. Nor is she presented as a close pathological study in naturalistic terms. She is, rather, a combination of these several strands, together with the pathos characteristic of Elizabethan and Jacobean mad scenes.[1]

Thus the characteristics of the fool or idiot, while stemming from a common type, were given some variation by the different authors in accordance with the different literary purposes for which they were used. Nevertheless, with a convention established, it is not surprising that the early Victorian writers retained some of the characteristics of it. To use a convention does not necessarily mean to blindly repeat it, and in different ways, writers of melodramas, Lytton, Collins and Dickens superimposed both Victorian ideas and their own individual ones onto the convention they received.

In his presentation of Barnaby, Dickens follows much of the established convention. Mental disorder is again apparent in physical appearance and Barnaby's dress is both colourful and unusual, his appearance and manner exaggerated, and his gestures wild and unsettled (ch. 3). His speech, when we first meet him is garbled, and he has a look which 'told his history at once'.

1. C.O. Parsons, Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott's Fiction (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), p. 140.

He has another conventional attribute, freedom of movement, and this is linked not to the pastoral concept of the folk fool but provides, in the novel, a link with his freedom of thought; and this freedom provides a contrast with much of the plotting and intrigue that surrounds the other characters.[1] His simplicity and kindness lead to other admirable qualities - generosity, loyalty and trust.[2] Because of this he is used by the other characters in the capacity of messenger, recalling the activities of Davie Gellatly.[3]

While endowing Barnaby with certain conventional attributes, Dickens does not treat him with a grotesqueness of character and manner, nor does he write about him in a grotesqueness of style that delights in incongruity - a grotesqueness that is so typical of Dickens as seen in many of his eccentric characters or characters with one main attribute exaggerated. In Barnaby Rudge, that style, with its satiric purposes, is reserved for Miggs and Tappertit, who speak in a peculiarly idiosyncratic way and who reflect the mock-heroic. Barnaby is in no way treated as a comic character or a figure of fun.[4]

Furthermore, while Barnaby does have some conventional attributes, which are what I presume George Gissing refers to when he speaks of 'fanciful caprices of the author',[5] Dickens has also given him

1. See especially chs. 10, 25 and 45.
2. His generosity is evident in his desire to share with Hugh and the Raven, the money he gets from Chester (ch. 10). He is loyal primarily to his mother and Hugh, but also to all who befriended him; as Hugh knows when he purposefully excludes him from knowledge of the attack on the Warren (ch. 52). He trusts the blind man who tells him that gold is to be found in the city (chs. 45, 46), and he trusts Lord George who tells him that the rioters are engaged in a worthy cause (ch. 48).
3. He bears messages between Emma and Edward (ch. 5), Chester and Haredale (ch. 10), and Rudge and Stagg (chs. 68, 69).
4. On Dickens and the grotesque, see below pp. 211-236.
5. Gissing, p. 113.

several individual characteristics that are related to his own particular situation, but are not essential to his role as a fool. They are the consequences of his place in the novel and they relate to the organic structure of it.[1]

Three of these individual traits are hereditary ones, the legacy of his father. Firstly, he has a persistent feeling of being followed (ch. 5). This is reinforced, of course, by Mrs Rudge's fears and by the fact that they are indeed being followed by Rudge. Secondly, he has an inordinate fear of blood, reinforced by the birthmark and related to the blood-guilt of Rudge. Hence, Barnaby cannot bear to touch the wounded Edward (ch. 4); he has dreams of blood on the walls and ceilings, dreams that cause him to wake shivering (ch. 17); and he is sickened by the sight of the riots when he returns a second time (ch. 68). Thirdly, he has a lust for gold and although happy in a poor existence, he believes, as did his father, that gold would solve all their problems. At the point when he muses about this, the blind man appears and speaks 'so wisely' about gold, telling him that it is to be found in crowds and noisy places (chs. 45, 46). For this reason he joined the rioters believing they held the key to the discovery of gold.

His involvement in the riots also makes him different from the traditional fool, who stood outside the action. But it is nevertheless an extension of his condition as a fool. This is shown symbolically in his love of finery. Part of the appeal for Barnaby was the wearing of the blue cockade and the holding of the banner. His delight in such things had earlier been innocently manifested in his dress and behaviour. The symbolic

1. Here I disagree with Edgar Johnson; see above p. 34.

link is obvious. The blue cockade shows the insanity of the followers of Lord George as distinctly as Barnaby's peacock feathers and whimsical dress showed his disordered mind.

Not only is Barnaby active in the riots, he is affected by them. When he wakes beside Hugh and Rudge in their dismal condition after the escape from Newgate, he remembers with nostalgia the time when he could run freely in the fields:

> He had no consciousness, God help him, of having done wrong, nor had he any new perception of the merits of the cause in which he had been engaged, or those of the men who advocated it; but he was full of cares now, and regrets, and dismal recollections, and wishes (quite unknown to him before) that this or that event had never happened, and that the sorrow and suffering of so many people had been spared. [ch. 69]

His solution is to wish again for the pastoral idyll, but, significantly , he wishes that his mother, father, he, Hugh and the blind man, could inhabit it together. The blind man he includes because he believes that he could teach them how to live 'without being pinched by want'. Barnaby's concept of idyllic peace is certainly non-discriminatory in that it includes all types, but the very nature of Rudge, Stagg and Hugh, together with Barnaby's firm belief in the power of money, shows his ideal pastoral to be now both impossible and tainted.

The ultimate shock of his London experience makes him ill (in true Victorian fashion), but he slowly recovers and becomes more rational, with a better memory and greater steadiness of purpose;[1] but he still continues his rambles, retains his affinity with animals, and has an aversion to London, which he regards as a terrific dream (ch. The Last).

1. Throughout the novel, it is not that Barnaby cannot remember past events, but rather that his memory is capricious. There is no definite sequence of thought and memory, no obvious relation between the present moment and the recalled one; nor can his memory of a specific event be recalled by a conscious effort.

Thus Dickens shows some development in Barnaby, a slight clearing of the 'darkened cloud', but it must be stressed that this is slight. What Barnaby chiefly gains is a widening of experience and a depth of feelings hitherto unknown to him since his life had been basically a sheltered, isolated one. He returns to that existence, wiser as a result of his past experience, though the wisdom is not directly related to the experiences. The sequence is not town-suffering-wisdom, but town-suffering-illness-rejection of the town concept. It is health-wisdom of a sort, but not a reasoned wisdom. It still relies heavily on a sense of feeling.

By giving Barnaby some individuality and relating his mental condition to his situation, Dickens causes us to ask questions not previously associated with the fool figure; namely, what exactly is Barnaby's condition and why is he as he is? Dickens's answers to both questions are not altogether clear. In response to the first question, J.B. Friedberg comments:

> It is difficult to understand Barnaby's affliction. Dickens says that he is wanting in soul, yet he behaves with fidelity and affection towards those he knows and cares for and he goes to what he expects to be his death with dignity and nobility.[1]

The result is uncertainty as to what Dickens meant by 'soul'. What he actually says is, 'But, the absence of the soul is far more terrible in a living man than in a dead one; and in this unfortunate being its noblest powers were wanting'(ch. 3). Dickens's terminology is not metaphysically or medically precise. It would seem, in view of the subsequent events that the noblest portion of the soul was its intellect, or power to reason, for it is this that Barnaby lacked, together with the ability to distinguish

1. J.B. Friedberg, 'Alienation and Integration in Barnaby Rudge', Dickens Studies Newsletter, 11 (1980), p. 14.

between moral good and moral bad. Viewed from this angle, the characteristics mentioned by Friedberg are emotional responses which Barnaby possesses intuitively.

Friedberg further asserts that Barnaby's coherence of speech shows that, despite what the other characters think of him, he is not an idiot.[1] He sees the main problem with Barnaby to be his perception - his ability ot observe the world through a different perspective. His perception of the world is highly imaginative and extends beyond the range of normal people. It is this perception that Hatfield Brush argued was the result of suppressed emotional needs, Barnaby's greatest aberration from the normal being in the sphere of emotional interaction.[2] From a close study of Barnaby from a psychological viewpoint she arrived at the conclusion that Barnaby was a case of what could technically be called a regression psychosis of a mild form. She explained this term as 'an arrest of personality development at an early stage'.[3]

While Dickens, of course, does not himself describe Barnaby's intellect in this way, he does describe and explain the environmental factors that have contributed to Barnaby's being what he is, and although Dickens appears to associate mental disorder with lack of intelligence (a correlation prevalent in his time), it is nevertheless remarkable that Hatfield Brush can extract a consistent picture of a known mental condition from Dickens's description. Because of this she maintained that, 'Whatever Dickens' true conception of Barnaby's intellect was we must recognise his ability

1.Friedberg, p. 14. L.M. Hatfield Brush, 'A Psychological Study of Barnaby Rudge', The Dickensian, 31 (1935), pp. 25-26, would agree, and illustrates that Barnaby's intelligence is generally good. Sanders, p. 81, sees, however, the moments of coherence as 'mawkish and unreal'.
2. Hatfield Brush, p. 27.
3. Hatfield Brush, p. 30.

in delineating so accurately a well-defined case of regression'.[1]

Dickens himself consistently used the term 'idiot' to describe Barnaby's condition. Hatfield Brush noted that:

> Although today the term idiot is a technical term among psychologists referring to the lowest level of intelligence, it was used popularly to some extent to mean also an insane person. In Dickens' day it must have been used even more widely in this latter sense.[2]

She then commented that it was difficult to discern whether he used it to describe a mental disorder (either because he so conceived it or considered that that would be how Barnaby's circle of friends would have designated him), or an intellectual level. I doubt if Dickens was concerned with such precision. Throughout the novel Barnaby is described as having an impaired intellect and as reacting excessively on the emotional level. He is obviously not regarded as mentally sane but it is evident that his, and Lord George's, insanity is of the least degree of madness; a condition essentially harmless (in the fool tradition) and not of the maniacal, frenzied type. Dickens is not concerned with the technical nature of Barnaby's insanity, but rather with showing it as a form of insanity, distinguishable from and better than other forms of insanity. Barnaby's simple idiocy is used to provide a contrast to the more dangerous and more harmful 'madness' of mob-behaviour, a madness that is both uncontrolled and terrifying.

Why Barnaby is as he is is another matter. Although Hatfield Brush asserted that, from Dickens's descriptions, Barnaby's state could be explained solely in terms of environmental factors, Dickens implies that part of his condition was the result of hereditary factors and moral issues. Barnaby's intellect has been stunted

1. Hatfield Brush, p. 24.
2. Hatfield Brush, p. 24.

from birth (a hangover, in part from the fool tradition, where the fool was naturally a fool from birth - in so far as the fool figure is ever conceived in any temporal mode at all), with the added implication that this was a moral judgement brought upon Barnaby as a result of his father's crime. This the other characters believe and insist upon, but what exactly Dickens believed cannot be ascertained.

What seems to be Dickens's approach is that the feeble intellect was a characteristic from birth (that is, hereditary) while the emotional manifestations of his condition are the result of environmental factors - though he does not, as did Hatfield Brush, see the arrest in Barnaby's development as related to his upbringing by Mrs Rudge. He describes that upbringing in poignant terms but does not imply that Mrs Rudge herself aided in the regression. Rather it is Rudge who is blamed: he, by his earlier crime, disrupted their environment, and he later causes them to live secretly.

While Dickens has endowed Barnaby with conventional attributes, he not only added individual characteristics that are related to Barnaby's position in the novel, but he also tried, like Scott with Madge Wildfire, to show Barnaby not just from a distant viewpoint but close up as well. The exploration of the close-up viewpoint led to difficulties in presentation.

To show Barnaby's feelings was simple enough, for it could be done either by discussing those feelings or by showing his nature through snatches of conversation and incidental remarks. These have the immediacy and simplicity of a child. But to extend the process and show Barnaby's conception of the world and himself necessitated either some explanation of these by Barnaby himself or lengthy descriptions of those feelings by Dickens. The latter,

however, would have read like a philosophical treatise. It would not, in terms of the novel, be satisfactory, for the omniscient narrator is himself outside the action and would only show another outside viewpoint - how the narrator saw Barnaby, as distinct from allowing Barnaby to reveal himself directly.

But for Barnaby to reveal himself directly involved a basic contradiction between concept and method. Barnaby, by virtue of his condition, had a limited coherence and lacked the ability to present a consistent and logical argument at any length. Moreover, his way of life, actions and behaviour follow a different framework from that of 'normal', rational people. Yet Dickens wanted to present Barnaby's viewpoint in a rational, coherent way. To do this without excessive intrusion on the part of the author required Barnaby to present the viewpoint. The result was a compromise between erratic thought processes and consistent argument:

> Why, how much better to be silly, than as wise as you! You don't see shadowy people there, like those that live in sleep - not you. Nor eyes in the knotted panes of glass, nor swift ghosts when it blows hard, nor do you hear voices in the air, nor see men stalking in the sky - not you! I lead a merrier life than you, with all your cleverness. You're the dull men. We're the bright ones. Ha! Ha! I'll not change with you, clever as you are - not I! [ch. 10]

It is such explanations as these that Sanders finds 'mawkish and unreal'.[1] Gissing, too, objected to the fact that Barnaby was aware of his condition and seemed to glorify it.[2] Further examples of this glorification are his delight at making the connection between his mother's sorrow and his birthday, thereby 'catching her out' as he puts it (ch. 17), and in his determination to face death bravely, affirming that, 'They call me silly, mother. They

1. Sanders, p. 81.
2. Gissing, p. 112.

shall see to-morrow! ' (ch. 76).

Such outbursts do have an awkward and strained air about them. As I see it, the fundamental difficulty is one of method and medium. Shakespeare's fools express themselves in quick and sometimes brilliant repartee. This is appropriate for the medium of the stage, and the immediacy of the presentation is such that the validity of a fool making pertinent remarks remains largely unquestioned. But much of the effect is lost when translated into the medium of prose, since the spontaneity from interaction in dialogue, a spontaneity which helps to suspend disbelief, is reduced.

Moreover, in King Lear for example, although we are concerned for the fool, our sympathy is predominantly with Lear, and to a minor extent with Kent. Dickens wants to centre our sympathy on Barnaby and his situation, and it is this shifting of perspective that highlights the basic contradiction of the incoherent and detached becoming coherent and logical. Dickens himself no doubt felt the difficulty, for he intrudes at times, to give a rationalized judgement on Barnaby's approach to life and to direct our response to it.

The other method of showing Barnaby's feelings and attitudes was to show his interaction with other characters in the novel. This is a less direct method and reveals as much about the characters themselves as about Barnaby. The most sustained relationship is, of course, that between Barnaby and his mother; an extension and expansion of the relationship found in Wordsworth's 'The Idiot Boy' and Scott's Waverley and The Heart of Midlothian.

Mrs Rudge has no illusions about her son's intellect and abilities, as she informed the magistrate when they were accused

of being beggars (ch. 47). The facing of this fact had not been without pain and suffering,

> watching for the dawn of mind that never came; how had she feared, and doubted, and yet hoped, long after conviction had forced itself upon her! The little stratagems she had devised to try him, the little tokens he had given in his childish way - not of dulness, but of something infinitely worse, so ghastly and unchildlike in its cunning - came back as vividly as if but yesterday had intervened. [ch. 25]

She believed that Barnaby's affliction was a moral judgement for his father's crime before he was born (ch. 73), and her constant fear to protect him from Rudge provides a motive for much of her actions and gives Rudge his hold over her. Nevertheless, because of his deprived intellect Barnaby was cheerful, affectionate, easily forgot past troubles and could find happiness in the simplest things, so that 'where many a wise son would have made her sorrowful, this poor light-hearted idiot filled her breast with thankfulness and love' (ch. 47).

But the inherent dangers for such a person as Barnaby are also made clear. Gabriel Varden is shown as realizing that Barnaby's easy nature could be directed by unscrupulous persons for their own ends. He regards Barnaby as 'a notable person ... to put to bad uses' (ch. 26); an obvious foreboding of the part that Barnaby was later to play, when Hugh, in a 'reckless mood' and despite (or because of) his affection for Barnaby as a fellow outcast, actually leads him into the riots. Hugh's misleading of Barnaby was not intentional - he 'didn't think what harm would come of it', and genuinely repented his thoughtlessness when they both faced the gallows (ch. 77). A more ruthless exploitation of Barnaby's condition is evident in the actions of Stagg and Rudge, both of whom use him for their purposes, even at the risk of endangering his life (ch. 69).

By far the most obvious highlighting of Barnaby's character is in the figure of Lord George Gordon, who is himself a study in a type of madness. From the point of view of Barnaby's character, the meeting with Lord George is both ironic and illustrative. They meet at the climax of the novel and the restlessness of each is echoed in the other (ch. 48). Several attitudes are presented simultaneously. Mrs Rudge, who knows her son's condition, acknowledges his deficiency. Lord George refutes it, not on the basis that to have mad followers would question the sanity of the leader and his cause, but on the basis that his own perceptions are different:

> He has surely no appearance ... of being deranged? And even if he had, we must not construe any trifling peculiarity into madness. Which of us ... would be safe, if that were made the law! [ch. 48]

This is, of course, deeply ironic, but it also serves to show the extent of Lord George's self-delusion. From motives of self-interest, Gashford advocates Barnaby's sanity and encourages Lord George in his purpose. Barnaby reacts with eagerness and pride. He unquestioningly joins the cause and his virtues, simplicity, generosity, faithfulness and trust are shown as being used against him; undesignedly by Lord George, but purposefully by Gashford.

Later, when Lord George has his own doubts, he has the wiser counsel of John Grueby who claims that Barnaby is mad: 'look at his dress, look at his eyes, look at his restless way, hear him cry "No Popery!" Mad, my Lord' (ch. 57). It serves no real purpose but his own dismissal, since Lord George reaffirms that a man peculiar in carriage, manner and dress should not be accounted mad, particularly when advocating a great cause. The comment on not judging by superficial appearance would be a pertinent one were it not for the facts that it is Lord George who makes it

and that appearance is linked to the 'great cause' which has shown itself to be a particularly irrational one.

Lord George is similar to Barnaby in that he is simple-minded and easily led. It is the combination of these two qualities that led Lord George to his fanatical espousal of the cause that was to lead to the riots, and to Barnaby's involvement in them. Neither character can clearly foresee the consequences of his actions (or for that matter, even vaguely comprehend the likely consequences). Both are shown as not dangerous in themselves, but as becoming so when misdirected and encouraged by others. Their virtues thus lose their real value by being put to evil purposes.

That the historical Lord George was indeed essentially innocent was a matter of debate. It suited Dickens's narrative and thematic structure that he be portrayed as such, and he defended his tolerably lenient view of Lord George as mildly deranged and misguided, to Forster, who saw Lord George's conduct and motives simply as those of a madman. In defending Lord George, Dickens wrote:

> he must have been at heart a kind man and a lover of the despised and rejected after his own fashion .... He always spoke on the people's side, and tried against his muddled brains to expose the profligacy of both parties. He never got anything by his madness, and never sought it. The wildest and most raging attacks of the time allow him these merits.[1]

Dickens, of course, does not deal with the degree of madness and in his own presentation he portrays Lord George as an easily-led eccentric, verging on idiocy, but not actually an idiot.

Contemporary views in Lord George's own time seem to have been equally divided. The most extensive report we have is that of Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, whose work was published in 1815. He

1. John Forster, The Life of Charles Dickens, rev. ed. (London: Chapman & Hall, 1876), Vol. 1, p. 161.

found Lord George to be a man of quality; regular in appearance, agreeable in conversation and gentle in manner. But he also observed 'something in his countenance and mode of expression that indicated cunning, or a perverted understanding, or both'[1] Not all contemporaries saw him like this, but much of the available material is confined to short, unqualified statements which do not adequately convey the person's opinion. Such evidence as is available has been presented by J.P. De Castro, who came to the conclusion:

> The balance of opinion seems to lean strongly to the view that Gordon suffered from some species of mental derangement, yet the present writer cannot suppress the feeling that had he been well cuffed when indulging his unbridled insolence, and reminded that being a Duke's son should not save his skin, much of his vanity would have disappeared.[2]

Allowing for De Castro's obvious class antagonism, it is clear that he believed Lord George to be only slightly deranged; much of the trouble arising from his being free to indulge that derangement. Ultimately, such evidence as we have leads to the view that Lord George's character remained something of an enigma, which left Dickens free to emphasize those characteristics that were related to the literary fool-figure, characteristics that helped to strengthen Dickens's symbolic and thematic purpose.[3]

The largest difference between Dickens's use of the conventional idiot-figure and earlier use is in the purpose to which Dickens has put it. Barnaby is at the moral centre of the novel. Scott, in The Heart of Midlothian had made Madge Wildfire the centre

1. Sir N.W. Wraxall, Historical and Posthumous Memoirs, Vol. 1, ed. H.B. Wheatley (1815; London: Bickers, 1884), p. 254.
2. J.P. De Castro, The Gordon Riots (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 248.
3. On Lord George as an historical figure, see Wraxall, pp. 251-55; De Castro, pp. 209-48; and F.A. Gibson, 'A Note on George Gordon', The Dickensian, 57 (1961), pp. 81-85. Robert Watson's Life of Gordon, written in 1795, is shown by De Castro (pp. 227-28, 245) to be largely unreliable for the period of the Gordon riots.

of a sub-plot and an essential adjunct to the theme embedded in the main plot. Dickens, however, brings Barnaby to centre stage. It was this central position that Gissing found so objectionable.

Gissing regarded Dickens's treatment as purely conventional, with 'no attempt at a serious study of mental disease'.[1] I have shown that Barnaby is not a simple repetition of a convention, but an extension and development of it; and that Barnaby's characteristics are related to the organic structure of the novel and are a consequence of the environment in which he is placed. That the two concepts - the conventional and the 'naturalistic' - sit unhappily together is another matter, but the very fact that there is some uneasiness in the presentation indicates that more than a simple convention is being offered. While it is true that there is no serious study of mental disease, I do not believe that this is necessary. If that were the criterion for the inclusion of mad people in novels, then many novels which deal with such people would be regarded as unsound. The condition itself can be regarded seriously, yet put to purposes other than the study of the mental state of the person. This is what Dickens does, and a criticism of his use must be directed to those purposes, not to a purpose that was not his.

On the level of definition, Gissing accused Dickens of a misuse of language:

> Idiocy means an imperfection of mind which degrades and possibly brutalizes; but Barnaby's weak point is a morbid development of the imagination at the expense of the reasoning powers; he is simply insane, and subject to poetic hallucinations.[2]

1. Gissing, p. 112. Gissing claims that Dickens had a leaning toward mad people, whom he liked to make amusing but that all, with the exception of Miss Flite in Bleak House, were conventional figures. On the variety of these people in Dickens's works, and their differences, see ch.V , below.
2. Gissing, p. 112.

This rather curt dismissal depends on Gissing's own distinction, and while the term 'idiot' certainly seems inadequate to express Barnaby's condition, so is 'simply insane'. Moreover, a morbid development of the imagination is a crucial part in the portrayal of several other characters in the novel (for example, Rudge, Haredale), and Barnaby's affliction must be seen in relation to them as well as in relation to the whole concept of sanity and madness which underlies the themes of the novel. I will deal with this aspect later.

Finally, Gissing objected on aesthetic grounds:

> Lunacy may be the subject of art, provided it appear as a catastrophe; we follow Ophelia or Lear with unabated interest when they walk in the dark places of the shattered mind, but that is because we have known them as responsible human beings. A born lunatic has no place as a leading character in a work of fiction ....[1]

Gissing's criticisms are based on what he saw as the possibilities of Art. As an ardent naturalist, he displays an anti-romanticist bias. The dangers of too much imagination are stressed, and, by his insistence on rational thought processes, he revives the concept of insanity as unreason. Like other late nineteenth-century critics, he misjudged Dickens's use of mad characters because his own aesthetic belongs to a different critical cannon. Gissing's own definition is in itself extremely narrow in that it assigns only one function to madness in Art - the tragic loss of a mind. Gissing thus saw insanity only in terms of character development, not in terms of an artistic concept of value in and for itself, a concept that can be used for purposes other than the serious study of an afflicted mind. It is these other purposes that Gissing could not accept. The symbolic nature of such a figure in relation to the scheme of the novel seems not to have interested him, and

1. Gissing, p. 113.

he therefore saw the moral point that Barnaby is a victim of his father's crime as an insufficient reason to justify the choice of subject.

Out of this also comes Gissing's approval of Dickens's abandoning the idea of introducing another madman:

> It came into his mind to show the mob or rioters directed by a seemingly acute and vigorous leader, who in the end should prove to have escaped from Bedlam; fortunately, his better judgement overrode this idea.[1]

In this, Gissing was following Forster's opinion.[2] I agree that it was a fortunate change, but not on the basis of unsuitability. It is rather a refinement of the idea that makes use of three characters; one a simpleton, one a natural, and one a supposedly normal member of the community who fulfilled a function for that society with a pathological intensity. The result is a more subtle exposition that would have occurred with three characters straight from Bedlam.[3] The fact that Dickens had thought of using characters from Bedlam shows that this was a serious purpose, an integral part of his concept of this novel, and that the final use of Barnaby was not due to an arbitrary desire for fanciful caprices.

Certainly, as a central character, Barnaby does not have the depth of reasoning over moral issues or the inward struggle

1. Gissing, p. 112.
2. Apparently Dickens was dissuaded from using three madmen as the leading rioters by Forster (Forster, Vol. 1, pp. 161-62). Wilkie Collins objected to Forster's belief that the idea was unsound and thought it a fine idea - 'New, powerful, highly dramatic and well within the limits of truth to nature. It would have greatly improved the weakest book that Dickens ever wrote ...' (marginilia in Collins's copy of Forster's Life of Charles Dickens, repr. in Pall Mall Gazette, 20 January 1890, p. 3; and in Dickens: The Critical Heritage, ed. Philip Collins (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 588. I do not agree that it would have greatly improved the novel, but Collins is certainly right in avowing that it was within the limits of truth to nature and counteracts the argument that it was inappropriate on, presumably, artistic grounds.
3. Butt and Tillotson, p. 79, observe that the 'ironic social point is better made by his actual choice of leaders'.

that is usually associated with a protagonist. Interest is not, therefore, sustained through his development as a person. Instead, Dickens concentrates attention on Barnaby's function as a fool-figure - making him a 'standard' by which the other characters are measured and placing him at the centre of the thematic and symbolic structures of the novel.

Basically, Barnaby's mind is of the timeless type; it is not radically altered by experience or age. As a consequence of this, on the level of making judgements, he is in a neutral state, but his amorality is of the kind that can be used by others for good or bad purposes. Since he lacks reasoned wisdom he becomes a focal point for the various themes of the novel. It is precisely a lack of wisdom that is so prevalent a cause of the father-and-son rivalry, as well as the riots themselves which engender madness of another kind; both themes raising the question of responsibility, parental and personal in the first case, criminal and social in the second.

The theme of the father-son relationship has been extensively dealt with by Steven Marcus. As he observes, the novel has five filial pairs and the experience of each pair illuminates and modifies the others, rendering Dickens's idea of the relation as a nexus of irreconcilable conflict.[1] The fathers represent authoritarian repression, real (Joe Willet, Edward Chester) or imagined (Sim Tappertit against Varden as representative of the father figure), or authoritarian neglect (Barnaby, Hugh). The most fully developed relationship of this kind is that of Chester and his two sons.[2]

1. Steven Marcus, 'Barnaby Rudge: Sons and Fathers', in Dickens: Modern Judgements, ed. A.E. Dyson (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 82-117 (repr. from Marcus's, From Pickwick to Dombey (New York: Basic Books, 1965).

Barnaby's relationship with his father is not central to this theme, only part of it; and it adds another dimension. Barnaby is blighted by an act of his father's before his birth - an irresponsible act which far from helping Rudge provide for his family, led him away from it. Rudge's act resulted in his becoming a fugitive, unable to care for his son, and in his furtive pursuance of Mrs Rudge he engendered fears in her which she unwittingly passed on to her son. Barnaby's unknowing pursuit of his father as the robber does seem to have symbolic overtones of the desire to be revenged on him, symbolic of hidden desires since he is unaware that it is his father. Barnaby is not just a victim of his father: the mark of Cain which he bears suggests that Dickens's feelings about the violated child and the avenging son have been brought close together.[1] But the theme of the avenging son, while suggested, is not expanded.

When Barnaby discovers Rudge's identity at Newgate his impulse for love is rebuffed - Rudge's experience has removed him from the ordinary claims of human affection. Although he has a sense of guilt about Barnaby he has no remorse. Having shed responsibility for his son and seen him only as a means of gaining power over Mrs Rudge, he is unable to resume the ties of parenthood.[2] In actual fact, the sons do not gain vengeance for the abuses of the fathers. This is paralleled in the riots where the oppressed, as victims of society, gain only a temporary ascendancy which, once the riots are quelled, is soon defeated. The point would seem to be a warning to authority (parental or public) not to

2. Marcus, p. 101.

1. Marcus, p. 99.
2. There is a parallel here with Chester's shedding of responsibility for Hugh, as Folland, p. 416, points out. The difference however is that Chester realizes that he has shed his responsibility and takes glory in the fact of having done so.

let, by indifference, harshness or brutality, affairs get to the point where the oppressed see revolt as an only alternative.

The riots are shown in detail as the development of madness of another kind, the origins of which are found in bigotry, mystery and suspicion:

> when terrors and alarms which no man understood were perpetually broached, both in and out of Parliament ... and bygone bugbears which had lain quietly in their graves for centuries, were raised again to haunt the ignorant and credulous ... then the mania spread indeed .... [ch. 37]

The movement, once started, although deserted by the honest zealots after the first march on parliament, gained in impetus and increased in violence. After an attack on a Catholic church,

> Covered with soot, and dirt, and dust, and lime; their garments torn to rags; their hair hanging wildly about them; their hands and faces jagged and bleeding with the wounds of rusty nails; Barnaby, Hugh, and Dennis hurried on before them all, like hideous madmen. [ch. 50]

Dickens thus forcibly contrasts Barnaby's earlier simple madness as a state of mind with the madness of the rioters, and he shows the transformation in Barnaby from one type of madness to another.

The other noticeable feature of the riots is that Barnaby, Hugh and Dennis are now indistinguishable, whereas it was Barnaby's idiocy and unusual appearance that had earlier set him apart from his fellow creatures. In the mob scenes, madness is of the type that eliminates individuality and reduces man to the level of animal savagery. However, it must be remembered that all three were characters who had been socially alienated in some way: Barnaby by his idiocy, Hugh by his illegitimacy and orphancy, and Dennis by his profession.

The image of madness associated with the mob is characterised by the attributes of animal savagery, demoniacal behaviour, wildness, drunkenness and complete lack of order, whereby the 'great mass

never reasoned or thought at all, but were stimulated by their own headlong passions, by poverty, by ignorance, by the love of mischief, and the hope of plunder'. The capacity of such a mob to attract new members was itself alarming:

> The contagion spread like a dread fever: an infectious madness, as yet not near its height, seized on new victims every hour, and society began to tremble at their ravings.[1] [ch. 53]

Images of surging water and raging fire (natural elements which are non-rational and non-discriminatory in their victims) reinforce the presentation of irrationality in the climactic riot scenes. These images are most evident in the attack upon the Warren where, among references to the madness of the rioters, Dickens observes that, 'If Bedlam gates had been flung open wide, there would not have issued forth such maniacs as the frenzy of that night made' (ch. 55). Similar imagery pervades the burning of Newgate (ch. 63) and the attack on the vintners (chs. 67, 68).[2]

Dickens was to repeat these basic images of water, fire, drunkenness, grotesque madness and bestiality when describing mob behaviour in A Tale of Two Cities, but now made much more of the persistent image of blood, particularly effective in his description of the revolutionaries dancing the Carmagnole, itself a symbolic revival of the dance of fools.[3] The violence and madness of the revolutionaries is such that it shifts sympathy from the oppressed peasants who, unlike the rioters in Barnaby Rudge, did

1. On the susceptibility of irrational people to be easily manipulated and incited to riot, see Folland, p. 411. Manheim, 'Dickens' Fools and Madmen', pp. 91-95, discusses how clearly Dickens saw and expressed crowd motivation and crowd pathology.
2. Although Dickens's treatment of mob behaviour and violence is expressed in imagery designed to heighten the symbolism of his novel, the fundamental irrationality and uncontrollability of the situation is attested to by contemporary evidence of the time, as was the failure of the authorities to act with sufficient promptness and resolution. See Wraxall, pp. 230-36; and De Castro, chs. 2, 3, and 4.

have some justice for their revolt, to the victims of revolutionary 'justice'.[1] The irrationality and arbitrary nature of that justice is further emphasised by the portrayal of one of the leading jurymen on the Tribunal, Jacques Three, as a pathological sadist who is more interested in the number of heads sent to the guillotine than in the question of whether or not they had actually committed a 'crime against the Republic' (III.14).

Ultimately the riots in Barnaby Rudge raise the question of criminal responsibility; the solution to which is left somewhat enigmatic, if not actually unresolved, by Dickens. The madness of the rioters and their actions was obviously deplored, but then it was only the most desperate and poor who were hanged; watched by another crowd, some of whom had participated in the riots, again involved in a delight in violence, but this time with a legal sanction.[2] A society which indulged in such spectacles almost invites riots, and the fact that it was society itself that made such outcasts as were willing to riot creates the ambiguity in Dickens's attitude.

Worse still, although the mob leaders deserve punishment, so does the cold, calculating Chester who, while instigating the riots, was free from responsibility for them. His punishment is left to the private vengeance of Haredale; a vengeance which has more to do with Haredale's personal vendetta and obsession

3. Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities (London: Collins, 1952), III.5. See also, II.21, 22.

1. J.M. Brown, pp. 121-22, is surely correct when he argues (against T.A. Jackson) that there is no suggestion that revolution is either constructive or beneficial. See also, Gordon Spence, 'Dickens as a Historical Novelist', The Dickensian, 72 (1976), pp. 21-29.

2. The most exhaustive study of violence in the novel is that of A.E. Dyson, 'Barnaby Rudge: The Genesis of Violence', Critical Quarterly, 9 (1967), pp. 142-60; repr. in The Inimitable Dickens (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 47-70.

than with retribution for Chester's involvement in the riots. While it is true that, as Folland asserts, the novel illustrates the broad theme that with all human experience, the health of an individual, a family, a society, a nation and human kind is interdependent, his belief that the chain of rational responsible action is firmly linked in the novel to sanity, both individual and social and that when that chain is broken, chaos, madness and violence are unleashed,[1] is true only in part.

Dickens raises problems concerning the level of sanity and madness which are only partially resolved. On the simplest level, of course, is the criminal responsibility of the insane, illustrated by the lenient treatment of Lord George and Barnaby's release on the grounds of diminished responsibility.[2] But then there are degrees of insanity. Hugh is portrayed as an unreasoning, animal type whose neglect was the result of Chester's irresponsibility and society's harshness in hanging his mother. Responsibility for his situation then becomes that of society who deprived him of his mother, yet expected him to exist somehow, and that of Chester who begat him but refused to accept responsibility for him. Other degrees of insanity appear in Dennis, with his pathological liking for his hangman's job; Sim, with his delusions of grandeur and his imagining of wrongs done to him and his fellow apprentices; Miggs with her frustration and hysteria.

The level of sanity is just as diverse: Chester, Stagg and Rudge manipulate others for their own selfish ends and they, together with Gashford, are totally alienated from normal human conviviality

1. Folland, p. 417.
2. The question of criminal responsibility and degrees of insanity had been raised by the 1840 trial of Edward Oxford, who had shot at the Queen. He was found guilty but insane. Butt and Tillotson, p. 83.

and affection; Haredale is obsessed with a twenty-two-year-old murder; John Willet rules the Maypole and his son with a bigotry and blindness that borders on extreme stupidity and does become imbecilic after the Maypole is attacked; Mrs Varden is caught in the grip of religious mania and self-righteousness. All these characters, sane and insane, are passionate and egocentric and contribute to the explosion of hate to which the novel moves. And set alone against them is Gabriel Varden whose genial sanity stands at bay, first in his home and then at the novel's fiercest moment at Newgate door.[1] On the helpful side one could add Edward Chester and Emma Haredale, but their roles in the novel are peripheral. Joe Willet, though sane, is forced into rebellion, and Dolly Varden, though sane, is thoughtless.

It would seem that sanity is not enough. Conversely, insanity is not in itself seen as a danger. Not only is Barnaby shown in the early sections of the novel as a harmless idiot, but the comparisons made between the behaviour of the mob and that of the people in Bedlam are to the advantage of the Bedlamites. The comparison shows where the core of danger lies. This is in the readiness of apparently sane people to give vent to hidden emotions and hatreds on the flimsiest of pretexts. Dickens seems to be saying, if one can fix him to any precision at all in his novel, that remove bigotry, ignorance, poverty and pretension and you remove the foundations upon which rebellions and riots are built and you take away the instruments by which the likes of Chester, Stagg and Gashford achieve their purposes.

John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson have both observed that Dickens recognised that in the popular mind madness, crime and

1. Dyson, p. 148.

revolutionary agitation ran into and coloured each other, but that he saw the need for discrimination.[1] This is true, not only for the reasons they give - the emphasis on Gordon's abnormality and the reprieve of Barnaby - but also by the deliberate emphasis on their inherent harmlessness in comparison with the hate and rage of other characters and the scheming and plotting of Chester. In this context I would like to put a different slant on something that many critics have noticed. Many have seen the fact that Barnaby and Gordon can be used by others for evil purposes, but they have also implied that this is their fault. Certainly it is a weakness, but I would contend that the using of these simpletons by others reflects more on the users than on the used.

The contrast between these two simpletons and others also implies a distinction between an inherent lack of responsibility and a negation of or misuse of responsibility. Gordon and Barnaby begin as, and essentially remain, innocents. In this sense they need protection and a warping of their natures is seen as a defilement, much the same as a crime against children.[2] Their role is esssentially passive, but they provide a yardstick for the moral concerns of the book - a kind of half-way house between the madness of the mob with the ruthlessness of its other leaders, and the sanity of Gabriel Varden who resists the mob. In some ways, too, Barnaby and Gordon become the 'norm' for the novel

1. Butt and Tillotson, p. 83.
2. On the link between literary use of fools and of children, see Jack Lindsay, Charles Dickens: A Biographical and Critical Study (London: Dakers, 1950), p. 181, and Philip Collins, Dickens and Education (London: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 194-97, 200-01. Collins notes that Paul Dombey in Dombey and Son in effect continues the dual functions of Barnaby - pathetic spectacle (victim of the father's sins) and critical commentator. Both Lindsay and Collins see a comparison between children and fool figures in that both, by their ignorance of worldly values, provide a challenge to those values.

and this is another disturbing feature of it. As characters that are neither good nor bad they provide a balance between those characters who are shown as morally good and those who are morally bad (irrespective of their sanity or insanity). In this there are echoes of the conventional fool who was a touchstone or sounding board for attitudes.

At this level, Dickens's use of characters in a symbolic manner becomes important. Most critics agree that Barnaby and Gordon serve a symbolic purpose but there is little agreement about what that symbol means. The fact that Barnaby's deficiency causes him to be easily persuaded has led J.K. Gottshall to see Barnaby as standing innocently between the devil's advocates and the forces of heaven, both of whom contend for the boy's soul, and to maintain that the resultant battle is a miniature of the larger conflict between good and bad.[1] Gottshall's article has the merit of seeing Barnaby at the centre of a metaphorical structure, but it does so at the expense of an over-schematic viewpoint that leaves much of the novel's complexity unexplained. To Gottshall, Barnaby's fate is unresolved and the book ends with a lull between the battle of good and evil. This conclusion is partly the result of his insistence on assigning to the Raven, on the basis of the Raven's outbursts of 'I'm a Devil. I'm a Devil.', a symbolic value as a representative of evil. This is to assign too much meaning to the Raven's comments, which are in essence no different from a parrot's saying 'Pretty Polly', and reflect more on the teacher (whoever that may have been) than on the Raven itself.

The Raven, in fact, merely copies what others say (as we

1. J.K. Gottshall, 'Devils Abroad: The Unity and Significance of Barnaby Rudge', Nineteenth Century Fiction, 16 (1961), pp. 133-46.

can see in his quick assumption of the 'No Popery' cry), in much the same way as Barnaby copies the rioters without knowing for what reason they are rioting.[1] Thus, when Barnaby says of the Raven that 'He's the master and I'm the man', this need not have the satanic overtones that Gottshall sees, but is rather symbolic of two other concepts. Firstly, the old Medieval parable of the blind leading the blind; and secondly the imitative possibilities involved in an amoral position - Barnaby follows the lead of the Raven who himself copies the actions of the observed world without moral thought.

Gottshall is right, however, in his claim that the issues of the novel are unresolved. This is due, in large part, to the ambiguity concerning the riots. The riots are an act of madness, but how sane was the society that led to them; a society dependent on the ineffectual mayor,[2] his brother the magistrate, and Dennis the hangman, and a society that saw virtue in Sir John Chester and raised him to his exalted station? When one looks beneath the surface, the definition of what is madness is no longer clear cut and no longer discernible from conventional outward mannerisms.

1. Gottshall, p. 145 (cf. p. 141). Curiously Gottshall sees the Raven as a representative of the Devil. This seems to be forcing the novel to fit an oversimplified view in an attempt to show unity through a single theme. The concept of the Raven as demonic is reiterated by R.M. McCarron, 'Folly and Wisdon: Three Dickensian Wise Fools', Dickens Studies Annual, 6 (1977), p. 50. It is true that resolution of the conflict between good and bad in Barnaby Rudge remains ambiguous, but this is not because Dickens leaves Barnaby with the raven at the end of the novel. If the Raven is not seen as evil, despite the fact that he is black (as ravens usually are), then Gottshall's point about the potentiality for Barnaby to be overtaken again by evil is lost.
2. On Dickens's treatment of magistrates in general, see Philip Collins, Dickens and Crime (London: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 182-90. There was a long literary tradition of magistrate-baiting upon which Dickens drew, together with his personal antagonism toward some of the more foolish magistrates in his own day. Nevertheless, the ineffectiveness of the civil magistrates during the Gordon riots was a historical fact. See De Castro, chs. 2, 3, and 4.

The riots also show the ease with which normally sane people are prompted to acts of madness. What in fact is lacking is a safe, absolute standard to judge actions and it is the resultant relativity that makes the novels' purpose so difficult to pin-point. In the thematic parallel to the riots, the rebellion of the sons against the father; both John Willet and John Chester are shown to be wrong in their handling of their sons, but then their rebellion, especially in Joe's case is not seen to be justifiable and he suffers in consequence.

Traditionally, Joe Willet has been seen as a healthy, sane character, and indeed for much of the action he is. Nevertheless, he is capable of being naive and foolish. As T.J. Rice points out, his rebellion against his father is timed for the evening of March 31st, with the successive flight and the deceptions by Dolly Varden and then the recruiting officer occurring on April Fool's Day. Edward Chester, being less a fool (and less a character for that matter), leaves his father on April 2nd.[1]

Although Joe's actions are not seen as justified, it is difficult to see how he could have acted otherwise than he did, while his father continued to regard him as a child and showed no signs of changing his attitude; indeed, quite the reverse. In such a situation, Gabriel Varden's counsel of moderation and compromise is inadequate, since the standpoints assumed by each of the antagonists allowed of no compromise.

This, in miniature, reflects the basic problem that remains unresolved. That Joe must suffer some retribution is in accordance

1. T.J. Rice, 'The End of Dickens's Apprenticeship, Variable Focus in Barnaby Rudge', Nineteenth Century Fiction, 30 (1975-76), p. 179. He also deals with this aspect in 'Dickens, Poe and the Time Scheme of Barnaby Rudge', Dickens Studies Newsletter, 7 (1976), pp. 34-37, where he postulates that the desire to show the revolts of Joe and Edward as encompassing April Fool's Day led to the various anomalies in Dickens's time scheme, anomalies first pointed out by Poe.

with the maxim of Dickens and his contemporary audience that the tie between parent and child was sacrosanct, like the convenant between God and mankind, or betwen king and subjects.[1] It is this associative link between father-king-God that leads to moral ambiguity. For while God was seen as an absolute good, kings and fathers could be bad. It would seem that passive opposition was the accepted means of resolution. This was the method of Edward Chester, but then he was not provoked in quite the same way as Joe: it was not his manhood (such as he had) that was called in question.

All this may seem to be far removed from Barnaby, but it illustrates some of the ambiguities in Dickens's presentation.[2] With Barnaby, it is unclear whether he is a symbol of original innocence or of original sin.[3] Since he becomes a 'standard bearer' for the rioters (a function which is obviously meant to have a double meaning), Gottshall sees him as the epitome of all those driven to riot by their heritage of lowly station and dulled or twisted wits.[4] But this is very much a simplification of the issue. What horrified Dickens most of all was the capacity of a mob to draw members to it, people who became caught up in the sea of violence. These people are not necessarily dull-witted, and a low station did not necessarily mean discontent. At one point he is quite specific on the issue: 'sober workmen, going

1. This was pointed out by T.J. Rice, 'Barnaby Rudge: A Vade Mecum for the Theme of Domestic Government in Dickens', Dickens Studies Annual, 7 (1978), p. 87.
2. T.J. Rice is correct when he claims that we cannot focus on one character independent of his analogues and that this leads, in the novel, to a variable focus that shifts from the close-up to the panoramic. See 'The End of Dickens's Apprenticeship: Variable Focus in Barnaby Rudge', p. 177.
3. Samuel Pickering Jr., The Moral Tradition in English Fiction, 1785-1850 (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1976), pp. 143-44.
4. Gottshall, p. 141.

home from their day's labour, were seen to cast down their baskets of tools and become rioters in an instant' (ch. 53).

On the other hand, Barnaby is seen as an innocent with the virtues of loyalty, honesty and compassion. In arguing against Jack Lindsay, who found Barnaby unsatisfactory as a fool figure, Robert McCarron asserts that ambiguity in itself is the central issue:

> Barnaby Rudge is undoubtedly ambiguous, yet does not Barnaby's own ambiguity serve as the perfect vehicle for Dickens' moral uncertainty? Employing the folk and Shakespearean tradition of the fool, identifying Barnaby both with demonic forces of destruction and with the redemptive power of innocence, Dickens revitalizes that 'dwindling magic'.[1]

The ambiguity in Barnaby's character exists, in the first instance, as a result of presentation. Although Barnaby is part of the fool tradition, he is also endowed with a past history, a specific environmental upbringing, and specific emotional and intellectual fears. The result is a mixture of symbolic function and realism, the uneasy blend of which has led to much of the uneasiness felt by critics about Barnaby as a character. He is neither an entirely credible psychological portrait nor merely a symbolic character. Although he has the Holy Innocent's simplicity, goodness and insight, he is also subtly associated with destructive, demonic forces.[2] McCarron sees the alliance with destructive forces as the key feature impinging on Barnaby's symbolic role.[3] I would argue,

1. McCarron, p. 46.
2. McCarron, p. 46. See also, Lindsay, Charles Dickens: A Biographical and Critical Study, p. 215.
3. Gottshall also sees these features as creating ambiguity and stresses that the age in which Barnaby 'lived' was not yet free from the pathology of insanity which prevailed in the Middle Ages, when the mentally ill were not sick, but were possessed by devils to be exorcised only by moral and spiritual agencies. While this is historically correct, and the extent of the moral cause of Barnaby's illness is ambiguous, neither Dickens himself, nor the views he puts into the mouths of the other characters in the novel, would suggest that Barnaby is possessed by devils.

however, that the bifurcation is a result of a wider combination that that with evil.

As a symbol, the fool figure is outside the action and remains outside because he lacks the personalized depth of other characters. The fool as an abstract, symbolic concept is achieved by an emphasis on only one aspect of his character - his fool's wit or his ability to elucidate or dissolve a situation. He may be shown as having human feelings, as is the fool in King Lear, but these are not his primary aspects and there is no deep delving into the processes of his mind. But once the cause of the fool's condition and the effect of environmental factors on his development and responses are delved into in any depth, then his purity in terms of symbolic value is diminished proportionally to the increase in character study. Our sympathies are engaged, not in so far as the fool is dependent on his master but for the fool himself and his vulnerability.

The second problem is that of interpreting Barnaby's symbolic function. This is affected by the study of Barnaby as a character. The use of a simple convention normally precludes a detailed study since a detailed study does not necessarily lead to clear-cut definitions. Without such definitions, a symbol is unable to provide an absolute moral yardstick. To avoid clear-cut moral distinctions, both Barnaby and Gordon are shown as lacking wisdom. In them, the tradition of the fool has become individualised, with the result that grey areas and complexities begin to question the very value of wisdom itself.

As a symbolic figure, Barnaby functions as a moral mirror to other characters, most notably, of course, Lord George. Although not wise, he asks pertinent questions, and his dreams of evil

and his ability to see plots in the clothes on the line (significantly while Sir John Chester is present) reveal an ability to see that there is evil and corruption lying barely beneath the surface.[1] Sir John may wish that such characters be hanged for asking awkward questions; but the fact remains that the questions that Barnaby asks are the essential ones that need answering. The implication is that the true questions are arrived at by instinct, not ratiocination.

Barnaby as a symbol is ambiguous; neither good nor bad, redemptive nor destructive, innocent nor guilty. He reveals the relativity of such judgements and he is used to question what exactly can be regarded as sanity. As a maxim, sane, rational behaviour was believed then (as now) to be the keystone of an orderly way of life. The first section of Barnaby Rudge shows Barnaby outside this normal structure because of his impaired intellect and because his values and reasons for living are quite different from those of ordinary 'decent' society. Within that society there are rifts which culminate in the rebellions of Joe Willet and Edward Chester. These events, however, are subsumed in the ordinary daily routine of life, and though we may question the rightness or wrongness of the behaviour of the 'normal' characters, we do not question their sanity.

But in the second section, as the riots gain momentum we are increasingly led to ask two philosophical questions which both relate back to Barnaby's condition. Firstly, who exactly is mad? When we see people behaving the way they do in the riots the very thin dividing line between sanity and madness becomes evident; not just in such things as John Willet becoming imbecilic

1. These points have been dealt with by McCarron, pp. 47-50.

as a result of personal trauma, but in the whole concept of ordinary people acting like lunatics or worse. Such madness is also shown to be subtly lurking beneath the animal brutality of Hugh, who fears no consequences, and the barely concealed pathological state of the hangman.[1]

Secondly, and more disturbingly, there arises the question of the rightness of sanity. When compared with the destructiveness caused by the sane Chester and Gashford, Barnaby's idiocy and Lord George's simplicity seem not only mild, but preferable. Even the obsessed Haredale can hardly be regarded as living a fulfilled life. His character is not exactly one of healthy balance. In his directness, he seeks confrontation rather than compromise, antagonism rather than reconciliation. The very value of insanity is being called into question.

What then emerges is that sanity is not easily definable, nor necessarily desirable. It is desirable when linked to other values like a generous nature or kindness as exemplified in Gabriel Varden, but it is not desirable when allied to tyrannical or self-seeking behaviour, as happens more often than not in this novel. Above all, sanity does not necessarily imply moral goodness.

Thus there is no easy answer to the moral value of sanity, or the rightness and wrongness of behaviour. Although the evil, sane characters lose much of their power, Dickens emphasizes that the hangings that follow the riots removed the weak followers rather than the initiators; and the victory of Gabriel Varden seems more to owe to plot contrivance than to any feeling of inevitability. There is no clear-cut victory, and to this extent I agree with Gottshall who sees the ending as a lull in the battle

1. McCarron comments on the subtle relationship between Hugh and Dennis and the fool tradition - p. 191, n. 20.

(while I still do not accept his simplification of the battle to that between good and bad).[1]

In this context, Barnaby's role must be seen as neutral. In a sense he becomes a moral litmus paper. He does not initiate action of either a good or bad nature, but he serves as a measure for those actions, purely because his character is amoral. What he retains is a purity and innocence of motive. His desire for gold and his joining the riots are the result of a desire to lessen his mother's burden and he does not realize the consequences of such actions until he sees the results of the worst looting and rioting, and even then he does not seem to connect them with the actions in which he took part.

To see Barnaby's role as neutral and amoral is in accordance with his central position, a position around which the many complex issues of the novel revolve. In terms of thematic structure there is no need to assign his role more precisely than that. The attempt to do so, as with Lindsay's discussion of the novel in terms of dark and light images, leads to over-simplication:

> The salvation of this world of darkness with fitful moments of deceptive and revelatory light, harmonizes with the central conception which reposes on Barnaby and Gordon. It expresses in the last resort the mental processes of those two Fools, with their painful struggle against dark pressures into a new understanding of the world.[2]

This is a forced reading of the novel, as it assigns a more positive role to those characters than the novel allows. In no sense can I see Barnaby as struggling against dark pressures - in fact he accepts people as they are, except in so far as he has been taught, for example, that robbery is wrong. In terms of Lindsay's own

1. Gottshall, p. 145.
2. Lindsay, 'Barnaby Rudge', p. 101. I am not disputing that much of what Lindsay says is true and valuable, only that the attempt to extend his specific argument to cover the total meaning of the novel is inadequate.

emphasis on imagery, Barnaby is a 'daylight' character, shedding naivety and simplicity on an over-intriguing world. Nor is there any sense of a struggle to understand the world. Barnaby sees things instinctively and is content with the vision of life he possesses. Similarly, Gordon, although he doubts at times that he is correct in his mission, and eventually fulfils one of his dreams by becoming a Jew, is not represented as struggling against dark forces within himself.

Lindsay also saw these characters as striving for a new gift of articulation. This seems to bear no relation to the novel, metaphorically or otherwise. Barnaby does not add something new to the riots, but has his own values swamped by them. His only salvation is to retreat to the country existence of his childhood. If anything, the novel reveals, not the power of Barnaby's outlook to supplant or replace other values, but rather its totally inappropriate nature and its capacity for easy subversion.

Lord George, similarly, has nothing new to say, and in fact his fanatical 'No Popery' is emphasised as an old cry. Nor do the rioters, as reflections of the worst aspects of these characters in their extreme form, seek anything but the destruction of what exists. They have no positive idea of the future, nor is their vision forward looking. Two of the leaders, Sim and Dennis, uphold the old days, one through a belief in the ancestral right of apprentices, the other through the time-old tradition of posing as an upholder of the constitution. Lord George's conversion to Judaism would also seem, in terms of his earlier Christianity, a retrograde step.

Despite all this, Lindsay saw the key figures as representing 'the future striving to be born, the wild confusion of hopes and

desires which can as yet be articulated only in tones of wild animals in pain', and that as such they provide the positive aspects that Dickens felt he was unable to impart to the rioters.[1] To some extent this is true: Barnaby and Gordon show positive and admirable traits of loyalty, and kindness exemplified by Gordon's actions in prison, where his charitableness and generosity are stressed as values worthy of being imitated by 'wise men in the highways of the world' (ch. The Last). But surely the most startling point that Dickens makes is that these values are not in themselves enough without the reason that can discern whether these qualities are being put to good or evil purposes.

Furthermore, as inarticulate expressions of the future, they imply a very grim prospect indeed. Lindsay believed that the future could be seen in the real goal of brotherhood which Gordon and Barnaby exhibit by their loyalty and devotion which transcends the historical situation in which they are devoted to a deceptive idea. Again, I would stress that such values are useless without some form of reasoning. Not that Dickens specifically draws this conclusion in the novel, but his presentation of those characters as capable of being led in either direction expresses caution and uncertainty as to the power of those qualities to achieve moral good purely by virtue of their existence.

In terms of symbolic value then, Barnaby and Gordon symbolize the ill-defined area between extreme madness and sanity, and, being amoral, occupy a neutral zone in the moral order. The difficulty involved in this is that, as neutral characters, they are the means by which others are judged as better or worse. This is disquieting for on a scale of madness and sanity ranging

1. Lindsay, 'Barnaby Rudge', p. 101.

from one to ten, one would expect the mean point to be at least five, when in fact, Barnaby and Lord George would occupy a position at three or four. Dickens has shifted the base point from which judgments are made. Having done so, he is led into philosophical doubts and difficulties which are not explicitly resolved. This results in a novel which allows of many different interpretations since the norm itself cannot be simply explained in terms of a simple balance between white and black. He has placed the fool figure at the moral centre of his value scale and has shown the inappropriateness of his norm in the world of the novel. Logically, one would expect a defeat of those values, and in a sense that is what happens.

I have dealt at length with Dickens's treatment of the Idiot figure in Barnaby Rudge partly because it is the most extensive use of the figure in the period and partly because it shows the inherent weaknesses of this tradition when transposed into the nineteenth-century novel. The basic conflict, that between symbolic function and realistic presentation in terms of plot structure and character development was encountered by other novelists who used the convention. As the century progressed the idiot figure as a traditional symbol was found to be less relevant as a means of expressing value judgements and thematic concerns.

The function and role hitherto assigned to the idiot figure began to be transposed onto characters who exist within the social framework of the novel and who are not strictly speaking idiots at all but who, by their questioning of values, their simplicity and naivety challenge the views held by the more 'standard' characters of the novel. In Dickens's own work for example, mention

can be made of Dick Swiveller, Tom Pinch, Sissy Jupe and Joe Gargery. All these characters continue the basic idea that self-seeking worldly vision is folly, while the folly of a simple heart is true wisdom.

In a persuasive article, R.M. McCarron discusses the variations in three of Dickens's fool figures: Dick Swiveller, Barnaby Rudge and Tom Pinch.[1] He argues that Dick is a development on the Shakespearean courtly fool:

> Dick is the traditional 'artificial fool', the intelligent comic who masks his wit behind the facade of folly. With his comic, satiric spirit and his peculiar mixture of worldly knowledge and innocent morality, Dick like Shakespeare's court jesters is wise enough to play the fool ....[2]

As such, Swiveller assumes one of the classic functions of the fool - that of moral touchstone - since, by his combination of worldly wisdom and imagination he counterbalances and synthesizes the extremes which in the novel are abnormally separated. His showmanship and clownish behaviour reveal the energy and satiric perceptiveness of Quilp without Quilp's self-enclosed bitterness and rage. Similarly, his own parodic poetics form a counterbalance to the sentimentality embodied in Nell's character, so that, 'unlike the majority of the novel's characters therefore, who all fall under Nell's morbid spell, Dick ... remains singlularly unimpressed'.[3]

As a character, however, Dick is too thoughtless, detached and self-centred to stand against the Quilpian world: he is 'a double fool, a wise fool who sees and understands the truth, and a comic butt duped and used by wiser characters'.[4] In the

1. McCarron, pp. 40-56. I am indebted to his article in my discussion of Dick Swiveller and Tom Pinch.
2. McCarron, p. 40.
3. McCarron, p. 44.
4. McCarron, p. 44.

traditional jester-fool figure this was not of importance since the fool, while commenting upon the main action in a play, stood outside it. It is in this area that Dickens shows a variation on the traditional concept. Dick, while assuming functions of the fool figure, is not a classic fool. Instead he is the fool figure more individualized and humanized, and a good deal more sane in his relationship to the society in which he exists. This differentiates him from the unindividualized conventional figure that was used as a vehicle for the expression of abstract concepts. Dickens tries to reconcile aspects of Dick's character - worldly wisdom and imagination - in a way not necessary in the more traditional fool. This he does by combining Dick's imagination with a new strength of character: he grants the frivolous Dick Swiveller an increased practicality while still retaining the imaginative, expansive comic world.[1]

The attempt to relate the fool figure to the society in which he existed resulted in an exploration of character and social problems that further removed Dickensian fool figures from their classic antecedents. This occurred also with Tom Pinch in Martin Chuzzlewit, of whom McCarron remarks:

> Dickens also moves beyond the Holy Innocent's simple moral and symbolic roles to explore Tom's isolated social position, frustrated sexuality and sorrowful awareness of his personal limitations. In the figure of Tom Pinch the Dickensian Holy Innocent becomes a character as well as a symbol, performing the fool's traditional functions, yet also endowed with a detailed inner life.[2]

Such an exploration of inner character led away from the clear-cut definitions of the wisdom in the fool. Once the tradition became individualized complexities arose and removed the value of the tradition as simple moral yardstick. In a sense, the symbolic

1. McCarron, p. 45.
2. McCarron, p. 41. See also Lindsay, Charles Dickens, pp. 237-41.

nature of the fool as a literary convention precluded any detailed study of character and its relation to environmental factors. McCarron understood this problem when speaking of Tom Pinch's role in the novel as both central and peripheral. As Holy Innocent he occupies a leading position in the novel's moral structure, while as socially and sexually isolated fool he remains a solitary, unassimilated figure. Dickens extends his use and understanding of the fool tradition, yet in attempting a detailed psychological analysis of the fool he encounters grave difficulties.[1]

As a fool figure, Tom basically has the role of the simple-minded innocent whose simple truth-telling has the capacity to deflate pretension, even though he himself is duped by the pretentions of Pecksniff. His function as moral touchstone resides primarily in his capacity to reveal another's moral strengths and weaknesses. He functions, like Barnaby Rudge, as an agent of redemptive innocence, counterbalancing the prevailing social-moral corruption. However, the study of Tom's own character as an individual rather than as a symbol shows that he also is susceptible to the social pressures of the time. Such an exploration subverted the fool's principal functions, and Tom Pinch displays contradictory impulses only at the expense of those functions.[2] McCarron argues that the sexuality latent in Tom's consciousness is at variance with the angelic purity associated with the Holy Innocent character. His quality as moral touchstone is also undermined by the sentimentality that is evident in Dickens's presentation. Ultimately the conflict between Tom's innocence as a moral yardstick and his inner impulses is side-stepped by leaving the inner impulses

1. McCarron, p. 52. On Tom's complexity as a social and sexual figure, see Michael Steig, 'Martin Chuzzlewit: Pinch and Pecksniff', Studies in the Novel, 1 (1969) pp. 181-88.
2. McCarron, p. 54.

largely unexplored. In contrast, McCarron argues, the comic fool like Dick Swiveller can have equal measures of sensuality and moral sensitivity since the intelligent comic fool has the creative imagination to reconcile these forces. In Dick's case, the symbolic function is superseded by an interest in character development. Dick is of interest as a person.

The use of humanized figures to express functions hitherto assigned to idiot figures continued in the later novels. McCarron sees variations of the fool figure in such characters as Micawber, Jenny Wren, Mr Toots, Mr Dick, Maggy, Mr F's Aunt, Florence Dombey, Cuttle, Traddles, Gargery, Twemloe. Many of these are hardly discernible as fool figures, and

> in one sense it might be argued that Dickens' vision of the fool degenerates, the clearly defined personifications of the tradition are superseded by somewhat more diffuse examples. On the other hand, the fool may be said to gain in importance, becoming more pervasive and spreading over the entire social spectrum.[1]

What this in effect means is that the fool figure loses its clear definition as a symbol and becomes submerged in characters whose actions and lives go beyond a simple traditional symbolic role. Increasingly, these characters are related to the world of the novel's principal characters and are not readily separable from them; such vestiges of the fool figure that remain are incorporated in character studies, rather than remaining independent of them or determining the limits of character.

In Dickens's work, the character of Sissy Jupe in Hard Times illustrates this transformation. Jerome Meckier argues that Sissy Jupe shows the influence of the Shakespearean fool figure:

> The scenes between Lear and his Fool served as models for the memorable encounter ... between Mr Dombey and his son on

1. McCarron, p. 56.

> the subject of money and for M' Choakumchild's attempts to force a Utilitarian world view on Sissy Jupe, scenes in which the simplicity of the child exposes the madness of the adult.[1]

While I do not believe that such a close influence is apparent, an important function of the fool is to show another point of view, to point to other possibilities of logic and perception; and in her fanciful approach to life Sissy does provide this contrast to the 'fact world' of Hard Times. Unlike the Gradgrind children and Bitzer, she remains unchanged by her experience at M' Choakumchild's school and her contact with the Gradgrind-Bounderby philosophy. This again resembles the fool figure who stood outside and was impervious to the main action and values of the central story.

But Sissy is not really a fool by the 'intellect' standards - she appears one to M' Choakumchild and others because she does not adhere to their limited value system. She serves the function of a fool, but she herself is not shown to be a fool, whereas the Shakespearean fool was an acknowledged fool and raised the paradoxical question of wisdom in the fool. It is a subtle development: the fool figure is humanized - Sissy is different from the rest of Coketown but not in extravagant gesture or mannerism, only in her background in Sleary's circus and in her espousal of non-material values. As a fusion of common sense, fantasy and moral awareness she provides an acceptable alternative approach to life, but her everyday life is not radically different from that of other characters. Only her attitude to what she believes to be the important values in life is different. In effect, an ordinary character has usurped the functions previously assigned to the fool figure.

1. Jerome Meckier, 'Dickens and King Lear: A Myth for Victorian England', South Atlantic Quarterly, 71 (1972), pp. 77-78.

Once the symbolic value of the figure was transferred to realistic characters who existed within the social milieu of the novel, then the ability of those characters to exist within that social framework while retaining their inherent (admirable) qualities assumed an importance not usually associated with the fool figure. For the novelists, this meant the portrayal of a character whose way of life upheld the social structure but whose moral values were a criticism of it.

In Great Expectations, Joe Gargery has qualities that are reminiscent of the rustic fool: he is simple, naive, faithful, humble, honest, unchanging and out of place in the city.[1] He is socially inept when dealing with his social superiors like Miss Havisham (ch. 13) and Jaggers (ch. 18). Although often semi-articulate he has a simple dignity and pride, characteristics Biddy points out to Pip when he talks of the unsuitability of Joe's manners for the company of a 'gentleman' in the city: 'He may be too proud to let any one take him out of a place that he is competent to fill, and fills well and with respect' (ch. 19). He has other admirable qualities too. He protects Pip as much as he can and refuses to accept money for the loss of their friendship, a fact that makes Jaggers look on him as the 'village idiot' (ch.18).

Thus he is used as a symbol of the simplicity of country life and the value of a pure heart in contrast to the over-sophistication of the city and the false values it encourages in Pip. But Joe is also firmly located within the social structure

1. His simplicity is established early in the novel where, although illiterate and uneducated (ch. 7), he is content and honest, and counsels Pip that 'lies is lies' however they come and there is no use telling them to become 'oncommon' (ch. 9). Charles Dickens, Great Expectations, ed. Angus Calder (1862; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967).

of his time, and he accepts the position assigned to him by it:

> I'm wrong in these clothes. I'm wrong out of the forge, the kitchen or off th'meshes. You won't find half so much fault in me if you think of me in my forge dress .... [ch. 27]

He tells Pip this as an explanation for the uneasiness between them when they meet in London in the apartments which Pip had insensitively arranged to assume their most 'splendid appearance'. Despite the uneasiness of that meeting, Joe is constant in his affection for Pip, tends him when he is ill and unassumingly discharges Pip's debts (ch. 57).

In fact, Joe is a representative of the honest-hearted, duty-doing man who despite his social origins exhibits middle-class virtues. This function, combined with his symbolic one creates an uneasy balance. Joe's intellectual powers are presented as those of an adult half-wit or a not very advanced child and as such he is exploited as a figure of fun to a degree incompatible with the dignity he is elsewhere intended to bear.[1] This creates an ambivalence in that we are invited to laugh at his oddities and admire his virtues at the same time. In the professional fool or the traditional Holy Innocent, the ambivalence involved in such a concept was not of importance because of the overriding symbolic status of the figure. The oddities were those of the fool and the virtues exhibited the wisdom of the fool.

As a symbolic figure the fool existed irrespective of time and place. But Joe is firmly located in both time and place. His oddities and awkwardness are more to do with his uneducated background and the limited environment in which he lived than to any innate idiocy in Joe himself. But his virtues stem from the same environment as well as from his acceptance of his dependent

1. J.M. Brown, p. 136.

status. This results in the pessimistic view that Joe's values are out of place in the city and would be warped in a society that allowed social mobility. The main point Dickens makes, of course, is that Pip's desire to be a gentleman blinds him to the reality of who his true friends are: the true gentleman is a gentleman at heart and not in outward appearance and social standing. In this way, Joe is used to highlight Pip's change of attitudes and the falsity of his expectations; Joe is there to bring Pip back to the values of perserverance and quiet industriousness as means of achievement. Clearly those are admirable qualities and worthy of emulation. A gentleman like Herbert Pocket exhibits these virtues without the oddities noticeable in Joe. In Joe's case, his symbolic status is undermined by the correlation of his virtues with his isolated environment, an environment which also produces his idiosyncracies. The character of Joe illustrates a basic problem in using an everyday character to function also as a fool figure. As an everyday character Joe exists within and upholds society's values and structure; as a symbolic figure he exhibits moral values that are a criticism of it. The two roles are not always compatible.

In Dickens's work, the other end-point of the fool tradition is seen in the figure of Sydney Carton, whose self-mockery, dissipation and carelessness are a form of 'rejection of the world of petty survival on the broadest of philosophical grounds'.[1] Carton is an introverted person - far more so than such a character as Dick Swiveller, to whom he has some superficial resemblances - introverted to such an extent that he is hardly discernible

1. John Kucich, Excess and Restraint in the Novels of Charles Dickens (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia press, 1981), p. 170.

as a fool figure at all. The fool figure was originally an extroverted and externalised character. Carton's function as an ironic commentator on society is further complicated by the fact that he serves as a double to Charles Darnay and in his final self-sacrifice he finds a more pure, if aggressive, means of expressing his rejection, while at the same time fulfilling his role of sacrificial victim by absorbing the guilt of the novel in place of the hero.[1] Ultimately, however, Carton's role as double for Darnay supersedes and replaces his function as a fool figure.[2] The associative link between guilt and madness or death was more fully explored by Victorian writers in their portrayal of criminals.

1. See Kucich, pp. 168-177.
2. On the use of the double in this novel see, among others, L.F. Manheim, 'A Tale of Two Characters: A Study in Multiple Projection', Dickens Studies Annual, 1 (1970), pp. 225-37.

CHAPTER III

MADNESS AND CRIME

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the mental torment experienced by criminals was seen as a natural and inevitable consequence of their crimes. Thus it was of the nature of a retribution. Even a character like Sikes in Oliver Twist, whom Dickens maintained in his preface was incapable of giving any indication of a 'better nature', experiences mental torment after his crime. In general, the hunted, shifty nature of the criminals' physical appearance was presented as a reflection of their poverty in moral outlook. The basic premise was the belief that to commit a crime was abnormal and entailed abnormal consequences in the extent of suffering and pain caused by guilt and remorse. In effect, this was a reinterpretation of the popular belief that madness was partly the result of being allied to the devil. The actual crime replaces the more abstract concept of direct contact with the devil, and the ensuing madness is seen as evidence of a divine displeasure, rather than as the divine gift that it had been with the 'idiot figure'.

By so using madness, the Victorians in general, and authors in particular, added to insanity a moral value which it does not inherently possess. In a society where God, and King, and the Father of a Household were all seen as the pillars of society, the linking of social, moral and religious concerns was inevitable. Reason, logic, and a pious, well-ordered life were the basis of the social structure. Accordingly, these characteristics were regarded as necessary for religious salvation and as morally good; while a disordered life, rebellion from the semi-divine authoritative

structure of society by crime, and absence of reason in the form of madness were seen as subversive and therefore indicative of and consequent upon a bad moral outlook.

This presupposed the melodramatic conventions that good and bad were easily recognisable entities, and that in the natural order of things rewards and punishments could be allotted accordingly. The Gothic novelists, despite the avant-garde nature of much of their material, kept this viewpoint clearly in sight. We are never in any doubt as to where our sympathies should lie. Though the villains sometimes experience remorse before the madness or death which is their punishment, we do not experience in any depth that remorse as it affected the particular individual. The actual nature of any mental conflict they experience is not described; in fact often the villains are neatly dispatched without any sign of remorse at all. Some ambiguities were there, but these were usually the result of sudden revelations of kinship which resulted in the sparing of an intended victim or a change in allegiance of a minor villain. In so far as we enter into the minds of any of these characters, they are the minds of the innocent victims for whose terror and helplessness we are urged to feel compassion. Often we are directly asked to imagine the terror and to experience it along with the victim. Thus our sympathies are carefully directed to what was believed to be the appropriate channel.

Such a neat apportioning of sympathies began to change with the advent of the Newgate novelists in the 1820s and 1830s. In their depiction of criminals, these authors began to dwell on the effect of the crime on the criminal's mind and on his mental anguish when awaiting punishment, and particularly on the last mental agonies of the condemned man. Part of this interest was

the result of the fascination with crime and the criminal's last words as revealed in the many handbills of the time which purported to be authentic records of the last words and confessions of real criminals.[1] These handbills flourished in the early nineteenth century and were of a piece with the high attendance at public executions. They were felt to be salutary, not only as a preventative but also because they confirmed the basic assumptions of contemporary morality on the horrifying consequences of crime.

But with the Newgate novelists, and with Lytton's work in particular at that period, the voyeuristic and moralistic concerns were not the only ones. There developed a genuine attempt to understand the working of a mind under such mental torture. In describing this mental state some sympathy for the criminal as a human being was evoked. To merely say that a man had been executed or had gone mad was to dismiss easily from one's consciousness any awareness of an actual person suffering; but to show in detail the thoughts of the person in torment would be to arouse sympathy for his suffering, irrespective of what had occasioned those feelings. A close-up view made it no longer easy to say the person deserved to suffer because of his crime. The criminal was then not so easily distanced from the reader, and accordingly the clear distinction between good and bad, that fundamental basis of Victorian morality, became more ambiguous.

It was this arousing of sympathies that appalled critics of the novel at the time. What they, and some more recent critics, failed to distinguish was that sympathy with the criminal's mental state did not mean sympathy for the crime, nor did it indicate

1. For a discussion of the influence on popular fiction of these handbills and of contemporary accounts of murders in the newspapers, see R.D. Altick, Victorian Studies in Scarlet (New York: Norton, 1970).

any desire that the criminal escape justice. Yet debate did rage as to what form that punishment should take, and, because of this, authors like Lytton (in, for example, Devereux, Eugene Aram and Lucretia) felt it necessary to intervene in person and remind the reader that the torments of insanity were as great a punishment as any scaffold. Generally, in the early Victorian novel exploration of extreme states of mind was reserved for criminals after they had committed their crimes. The actual commission of a crime was felt to be a sufficient antidote to any pity engendered for the criminal, and the criminal's torment was regarded as salutary.

The theme of the criminal mind was most fully exploited by Dickens. In Dickens's works, the very precariousness of existence that surrounds criminal characters became symbolised in the precariousness of their mental state. Their instability is such that any sudden revelation can and does topple their grip on reality. The most melodramatic instance is that of Betty in Oliver Twist. Her main function in the novel is to identify Nancy's dead body, but after that experience she 'went off mad, screaming and raving, and beating her head against the boards; so they put a strait wesket on her and took her to the hospital - and there she is'.[1] There is no solid reason why Betty, having lived among the general scum and refuse of the London slums, should have been so violently affected. Her madness is insufficiently motivated. We are in the realms of stagey melodrama and can sense the stage direction 'Exit Betty in Strait Jacket'.

However, the link between madness and crime in Oliver Twist is not as arbitrary a thing as the incident with Betty would imply. It is never very far below the surface in the novel. Several

1. Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist, ed. Kathleen Tillotson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), ch. 50.

times the criminal characters believe that one or other of them has gone mad. Both Fagin and Sikes frequently believe that Nancy has gone 'out of her mind', particularly in her actions over the treatment of Oliver. Much of this, of course, was common usage to express the fact that someone did not act in accordance with what was expected of them. But it does add to the cumulative effect. The bystanders in town also believe Nancy to be mad when she rushes through the town (ch. 40). Fagin believes Charley Bates has gone mad to even contemplate going into court (ch.43); Sikes believes Fagin has gone mad prior to Fagin's disclosure about Nancy (ch. 47). Although common parlance for an expression of disapproval, this consistently keeps an image of insanity and crime as closely linked. More powerfully, it is reinforced by the vivid hallucinations that the criminals experience. Nancy, having decided on the course that will lead to her destruction, hallucinates passing coffins and shows the fears and presentiments often associated with guilt, in this case guilt concerning her fellow criminals (ch. 47).[1]

But the most sustained hallucinatory experiences are reserved for Sikes and Fagin. In his preface to the third edition, Dickens stated his belief that Sikes was one of those 'insensible and callous natures that do become, at last, utterly and irredeemably bad' (p. xxviii). Accordingly, for most of the book he is shown as a brutal, coarse, oath-swearing, violent man, steeped in the squalor and uncertainty of criminal life.[2] His capacity for violence is hinted at throughout, and it culminates in the murder of Nancy. Manheim succinctly sums up the portrayal: 'Of Sikes, we can say

1. On the ambivalence in Nancy's character see Manheim, 'Dickens' Fools and Madmen', pp. 80-81.
2. On the brutal aspects of Sikes, see Collins, Dickens and Crime, pp. 261-65.

that he is the epitome of the psychopathic personality; such a diagnosis merely uses psychiatric terminology to repeat Dickens's moral characterisation'. Manheim is less happy about Dickens's portrayal of Sikes after the murder since he believes that Sikes's last-moment remorse and flight make good melodrama, but they tend to detract from the general clinical picture.[1] Certainly there is some awkwardness in showing Sikes as sensitive to remorse and thereby suffering in accordance with the moral retribution required in melodrama. But even within the limitations of melodrama, considerable ambiguity is evident.[2] Dickens wished to explore the mind of a brutish character and his experiences after a murder. At first this is done powerfully, but in terms of convention. We see him verging on insanity as the result of his visions of Nancy and the hallucination of her eyes haunting him.[3] But since Dickens deals so vividly and at such length with Sikes's flight he imparts an immediacy to Sikes's feelings, and by taking us partly inside the mind of the hunted man he takes our sympathy there also. This is quite contrary to the normal melodramatic practice. Sikes reaches the state where every object, substantial or shadowy, is as fearful a thing as the imagined figure of Nancy.

In part to allay the sympathies evoked and to reinforce the moral purpose of this mental torment, and in part to offset the criticism that Sikes was not eventually to be brought to legal justice, Dickens intervenes in his own voice: 'Let no man talk

1. Manheim, 'Dickens' Fools and Madmen', p. 81.
2. This was noted soon after the novel was first published. See R.H. Horne, 'Charles Dickens', in A New Spirit of the Age (1844; London: World'sClassics ed., Oxford University Press, 1907), pp. 26-27; quoted also in Dickens: The Critical Heritage, ed. Philip Collins, p. 200.
3. Monks, in the same novel, had used just such a consequence as a reason for not wanting to be involved in murder: 'I won't shed blood; it's always found out, and haunts a man besides' (ch. 26).

of murderers escaping justice, and hint that Providence must sleep. There were twenty score of violent deaths in one long minute of that agony of fear' (ch. 48). Clearly we are meant to accept that the mental turmoil Sikes experiences is a form of retribution. Whether we do accept this is another matter. When Dickens describes Sikes's feverish action of helping to put out the fire - itself an indication of his attempt to regain contact with his fellow man - and the tenfold recurrence of his fears after the mad excitement of that act had passed, and then his retreat back to London to be treated by his fellow criminals as an outcast, our sympathies are rather for than against Sikes.

What has become disturbing is not so much the fact that there are elements of melodrama in Sikes's flight as the fact that Dickens has ceased to view Sikes as criminal patient. He does not provide a neat clinical picture by preserving the distance of doctor and patient as seen from the doctor's point of view (as Manheim would have preferred); nor does he show the effect from an outsider's point of view. Instead, Dickens explores the effects of madness on Sikes from Sikes's point of view. Sikes's death becomes almost an anticlimax in comparison to the punishment he has already undergone.

The whole effect is further complicated by the behaviour of the mob pursuing him, ostensibly in the cause of 'justice': 'The cries and shrieks of those who were pressed almost to suffocation, or trampled down and trodden under foot in the confusion, were dreadful ... ' (ch. 50). Similar behaviour from a mob is described when Fagin is arrested. Not only does the behaviour of the mobs sever our sympathy from the upholders of justice, but it also reveals in them a spirit akin to that which had caused

Sikes to murder Nancy. Furthermore, a crowd had behaved with similar irrationality earlier in the novel when they had chased Oliver whom they falsely believed to have been a thief (ch. 10). There, we were clearly meant to sympathise with Oliver as victim of the 'passion for hunting something' which was 'deeply implanted in the human breast' and which turned ordinary people into predatory beasts in an instant. In the later case our sympathies move also to Sikes as victim of the chase. Thus the feeling of retribution is modified by our feeling for the isolated man. This had been noted by R.H. Horne as early as 1844 when he observed that 'We are with this hunted-down human being, brought home to our sympathies by the extremity of his distress; and we are not with the howling mass of demons outside'. Because of this, Horne pointed out, the intended moral had an immoral tendency.[1]

Similarly Fagin, once caught, becomes an object of sympathy, largely because the forces pitted against him are so overwhelmingly strong that his only defence is to retreat into a semi-hallucinatory state. He idly contemplates intricate details in the courtroom, speculates about the judge, the artists in the gallery and the spikes in the railing, as if he were attending the trial of somebody else. At the same time his mind is never free from 'one oppressive overwhelming sense of the grave that opened at his feet; it was ever present to him, but in a vague and general way, and he could not fix his thoughts upon it' (ch. 52). This is while he awaits trial. When he is taken to the condemned cell, he experiences paroxysms of 'fear and wrath' and 'all the tortures of his evil conscience'. His mind, cracking under the enormity of imminent

1. Horne, p. 27. See also, Collins, Dickens and Crime, p. 263. It was this feature that formed a large part of the criticisms of the time.

death, wanders to his old life: 'for he continued to mutter, without appearing conscious of their presence otherwise than as part of his vision' (ch. 52). Particularly effective is the device of showing the passing of time concurrently with Fagin's disordered sense of reality. The snatches of his past life are remembered out of sequence, and he fails to comprehend reality any more. Even his attempt to use Oliver as a means of escape is an act of desperation that fails to allow for the reality of his position.

Dickens had earlier used similar images to describe the feelings of the condemned man in 'A Visit to Newgate' (Sketches by Boz, Scene 25). But the treatment of Fagin is longer and is pitched higher; it shows more insight into the character of the condemned man; and, as its final paragraph about the scaffold shows, the effect is more complex.[1] Part of this complexity comes from Dickens's more skilful use of prose - there is less authorial intrusion, less rhetoric, and a more sustained sense of atmosphere. Fagin's feelings are experienced more directly by the reader - an effect strengthened by the fact that Fagin for most of the novel has been very much alive.

In Dickens's next study of the criminal mind, that of Rudge in Barnaby Rudge, he achieves nothing that he had not already achieved in Oliver Twist.[2] Rudge has the traditional characteristics of villains: shiftiness of aspect, ruthlessness, mysterious comings and goings, physical neglect, poverty, general moral insensibility.

1. Collins, Dickens and Crime, p. 43. H.P. Sucksmith, 'The Secret of Immediacy: Dickens' Debt to the Tale of Terror in Blackwoods', Nineteenth Century Fiction, 26 (1971-72), pp. 145-57, discusses possible influences on Dickens's treatment of the Trial Scene and of the man in the condemned cell, and mentions similarities to earlier tales.
2. Collins, Dickens and Crime, p. 276. As will be seen, Collins's view is justified.

But for the most part, his physical deterioration is felt sufficient to explain moral deterioration.

The effect of Rudge's crime is far more important to others in the novel than to himself. There is no attempt to explain his motivation or feelings, except in so far as he has the hunted appearance of a man on the run. This alienation of feeling is not as appropriate to Rudge as it was to Sikes. After all, Sikes had just committed his crime, whereas Rudge's crime had occurred twenty years earlier and he had never been suspected. Rudge's mental state as a result of his crime is more in the interests of Victorian morality than a credible result of his character and actions. Here is a further example of the Victorian wish and belief that crime brought its own suffering. Poe saw the inherent problem in this at the time: 'That Rudge so long and so deeply felt the sting of conscience is inconsistent with his brutality'.[1] Forster did not share Poe's view, but saw in Dickens's treatment of Rudge 'as powerful a picture as any in his writings of the unfathomable consequences of sin'. Lord Lytton agreed with Forster's assessment.[2] Both men were obviously impressed by its value as a moral warning, but as Philip Collins has more recently noted, conventional demands are indeed at conflict with probability and 'Dickens is in fact guilty of gross overwriting. Rudge is entirely unconvincing'.[3] That is, Rudge, for the sake of melodramatic convention, is given a psychological make-up inconsistent with his circumstances in the novel. Imbued with an obsession with his crime, he is used all too obviously for the didactic purpose of revealing the evils

1. E.A. Poe, Review of Barnaby Rudge in Graham's Magazine, 19 (February, 1842), as repr. in Dickens: The Critical Heritage, ed. Philip Collins, p. 110.
2. Forster, Vol. 1, p. 164.
3. Collins, Dickens and Crime, p. 275.

of crime without any individual relevance to his particular crime. Such a presentation suggests that advanced exploration of madness in the criminal mind was being hampered by the assumptions of melodrama.

Dickens, however, gradually began to subordinate melodramatic characteristics to those of an individual mind in mental conflict. Such a conflict was seen as determining character, rather than being a superficial attribute superimposed on it. Instead of being told that certain mental effects occurred as a result of crime we are led to experience those effects in some detail. This Dickens achieves in two ways. Firstly, there is a move toward showing mental conflict prior to the crime. Being a move away from simple retribution, this places madness in a different relation to crime. Secondly, there is an increasing interest in exploring the actual nature of the mental state. This is done by the use of dreams and hallucinations (themselves a type of paranoid projection and an extension of the phenomena which Dickens had described Sikes and Fagin as experiencing) and by the use of a double figure - both a symbolic, real one to express contradictory aspects of personality and an inner double to express a divided personality. The use of a 'double' as a literary device was not, of course, peculiar to Dickens. Its origins can be found in the doppelgänger of Gothic literature, and variations on it continued after Dickens's lifetime, in the literature of the late Victorian period and into the twentieth century.[1]

The first extended use of the double in Dickens's work occurs

1. For a survey of this tradition, a detailed discussion of which would be out of place here, see Robert Rogers, A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970).

with Jonas Chuzzlewit in Martin Chuzzlewit. The bifurcation in Jonas's character occurs before he actually commits a real crime, and his doubleness can be seen in the elaborate plans he makes for it.[1] By adopting the dress of a coarse and common person, and by slipping out secretly at night, leaving the impression that he was still in bed, Jonas emblematically sheds one nature and adopts another. His dream on the way to commit murder further expresses the dissociation occurring in his character - a dissociation symbolized by the dream-companion who was never the same character two minutes together (ch. 47).

The dream also serves to bring Jonas's unconscious mind to the surface and as he wakes his unconscious thoughts merge with his conscious recognition of the fact that he will commit murder.[2] After this he unquestioningly accepts the fact of murder, but the isolation expressed in the dream becomes so severe that he becomes unsure whether he is himself or himself of the dream. Furthermore, his main means of reassurance about his objective identify, contact with other people, is completely shaken by his own subjectivity: he now has to 'test' their reactions before appearing among them. Thus, after the crime, the division in Jonas's mind becomes more acute, and Dickens is insistent that this has nothing to do with remorse or penitence as Jonas is not sorry for having committed the murder. His real problem has become one of identity. Having created an illusion of a double for the purpose of concealing his crime, he begins to believe in the physical existence of that double.

1. A useful and extended discussion of Dickens's use of the double figure in general and its application to Jonas in particular is Lauriat Lane Jr., 'Dickens and the Double', The Dickensian, 55 (1959), pp. 47-55. His view is repeated and supported by Collins, Dickens and Crime, pp. 278-80.
2. On the symbolism of his dream see Joseph Brogunier, 'The Dreams of Montague Tigg and Jonas Chuzzlewit', The Dickensian, 58 (1962), pp. 165-70.

He believes that he is two people and not one, and doubts his ability to control the 'other' character:

> Dread and fear were upon him, to an extent he had never counted on and could not manage in the least degree. He was so horribly afraid of the infernal room at home. This made him, in a gloomy, murderous, mad way, not only fearful for himself, but of himself; for being, as it were, a part of the room: a something supposed to be there, yet missing from it: he invested himself with its mysterious terrors ... he became in a manner his own ghost and phantom, and was at once the haunting spirit and the haunted man. [ch. 47]

Accordingly, he entered his room on tip-toe as though he 'dreaded to disturb his own imaginary self'. As Lauriat Lane has observed, it is a case of the conflict between the world's sense of reality and what Jonas himself knows to be true combining with his guilty fear to produce a state of hallucination.[1]

Jonas's lack of belief in his objective self is further emphasised by his fear of going among the household before being seen in passing, and by calling out so that 'they may become accustomed to his voice'. These fears that he has in fact become someone else reflect the fact that his murderous action has set him apart from most other people. But also, and more importantly, the secrecy which he is forced to keep within himself makes him feed upon his own double nature. The fantasies and fears of Jonas are the picture of a mind on the edge of insanity.[2] It is these touches of insight into the mind of Jonas that separate him from stagey melodramatic villains, even though he shares some of their characteristics. Jonas's feelings are described vividly from an internal viewpoint. The conventional melodramatic villain, like Rudge, is seen from the outside.

But in terms of the use of madness, there is still an element

1. Lane, p. 49.
2. Edmund Wilson, 'Dickens: The Two Scrooges', in The Wound and the Bow, rev. ed. (1941; London: Methuen, 1961), p. 15, following a suggestion by Taine.

of retribution. However, by taking the conflict in Jonas to the point before the murder, the situation is more complex for the madness is not solely a result of crime, but also part of his state before the crime. Not that this is seen as a reason for the crime. The motivation for that lies elsewhere, and is also a result of warped thinking: Jonas's concentration on self is developed to such a degree that other people are merely tools or obstacles to his own desires, and their removal is made necessary by the preservation (as Jonas sees it) of his own needs. Thus some explanation is offered for the mental reasons for the crime. This exclusiveness of self is related not only to Jonas's own miserly upbringing but also to the general theme of the novel. It is in fact an obsessive concern with self that is the ultimate factor in Jonas's conceiving of himself as a double.

This hallucinatory division in the mind was not restricted to murderers. It is seen also in the flight and death of Carker in Dombey and Son. This occupies the whole of chapter 55 in that novel, and the intensity and clarity of the description is illustrative of George H. Lewes's contemporary observation that

> In no other perfectly sane mind (Blake I believe was not perfectly sane) have I observed vividness of imagination approaching so closely to hallucination ....[1]

Lewes was speaking of Dickens's work as a whole, but his comments are particularly applicable to the description of Carker in that Dickens there describes in detail a mind suspended in an hallucinatory state.

Carker has reached the stage where 'he could not think to any purpose. He could not separate one subject of reflection from

1. Quoted by Humphry House, 'The Macabre Dickens', in The Dickens Critics, ed. G.H. Ford and Lauriat Lane Jr. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1961), p. 195.

another, sufficiently to dwell upon it by itself, for a minute at a time'. This confusion reaches a fevered visionary stage and a feeling 'of being parched and giddy and half mad'. The whole trip to Paris and the return to England is described in terms of the fleeting impressions of outward reality in the passing countryside. The journey itself, with the emphasis on bells, horse movements and wheels, reflects the paradoxical combination of monotony and movement within Carker's mind. The effect of these contradictory concepts is to create a kind of stasis in Carker. He cannot think to any purpose, and the stasis can break only by the complete disintegration of his mind, symbolically occurring here with his death by the force of an onrushing train.

W.F. Axton has noted the dual effect created in Carker by the coupling of a sense of frantic progress with a static condition of hysterical dislocation of vision.[1] But the whole effect is more complicated than Axton notes. For not only is Carker's hysterical dislocation static, but it also absorbs and transforms the outward images and conditions the reality of them; they themselves add to the increasingly changing impressions with which his mind tries to grapple. Moreover, the images are very selective and disorientating in that they are disembodied from their objective existence and cease to exist for Carker except as selective, symbolic images. By doing this, Dickens achieves the effect of showing us that the concrete observable things of everyday life are as real as they ever were but they have become different for Carker since his mind, rushing madly from one thing to another with no fixed point to settle upon, is out of order. It is Carker's fleeting consciousness that gives the effect of rapid progression of objects

1. W.F. Axton, Circle of Fire (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966), p. 246.

(as distinct from his actual physical movement) so that one object changes into another to such an extent that the reality outside becomes conditioned by Carker's view of it.[1] In this sense the objects themselves are the static entity (their nature has not objectively changed). Carker's mind is the medium of change and progression.

Thus a double dislocation occurs. The observable objects are changing in the limited sense that different things are seen - as on any rapid journey - while Carker's mind remains in a state of near-madness. On the other hand, the objects themselves are unchanged from what they were yesterday, and they have permanence, a permanence reinforced by the concrete detail with which they are described. But Carker's mind has reached a point where the moving and transitory images are the only real images of the objects with which he can identify. Since the whole scene is described from the point of view of the effect on Carker's consciousness, there is a dream-like aura superimposed on real incidents, and it robs them of their real substance. Carker has the feeling that he is participating in a journey, but because his mind is on other things and is now barely controlled by his conscious self, it is a very vague feeling indeed; there is no firm sense that he is actually participating in the action. His own consciousness is thereby removed from what he is physically seeing and doing, creating the effect that his mind is watching the action of his body, rather than being co-ordinated with it; so that the action he views seems as though it were being done by someone else. It is a similar experience, enlarged and amplified, as that felt by Fagin at his

1. An excellent discussion of the literary methods used by Dickens to express this disorientation is that of Axton, pp. 150-51, 238-48.

trial, and Dickens's descriptions are such that we share the immediacy of the experience as well.

The dislocation increases in England where Carker, like Sikes when he returned to London, hopes to establish some real contact with fellow human beings in an attempt to reassure himself about his own reality. 'His thoughts not to be stopped or directed, still wandered where they would, and dragged him after them', to the extent that he 'had no more influence with them ... than if they had been another man's' (ch. 55). Fantasy and reality are intermingled - on top of remembered scenes from his past, concern about his immediate situation and his plans for future action, is superimposed a memory of the visions of his journey rather than the journey itself. It culminates in his meeting with Dombey, where the reality of Dombey as distinct from his fevered vision of him causes his terror (rather than fear of Dombey as a person with certain characteristics) and his subsequent stepping back thoughtlessly to meet his death.

While this exploration of madness within Carker shows Dickens's increasing interest in the psychology of criminals, traces of melodramatic convention are also still evident. Carker's villainy is insufficiently motivated, some of his attitudes are sinister, and much of what he says (particularly at Dijon when he joins Edith) is histrionic. But in the portrayal of madness Dickens moves away from conventional type. Carker is not revealed externally as a villain justly foiled in his designs, but rather as a character upon whom much significance is placed by means of the vivid portrayal of his torment.[1] A particularly horrifying feature of Dickens's presentation is that Carker (like other 'tormented' criminals in

1. A point noted by House, p. 194.

Dickens's works) appears to know that he is going mad - to have one sane half of his mind able to horribly appreciate his deteriorating condition. The reader becomes immersed in Carker's perceptions and feelings to the extent that he takes part in them. This is all the more so since his antagonist, Dombey, has, up to this point in the novel, been a largely unsympathetic character.

Carker's fate begs one final question. Are his half-madness and death parcelled out as retribution to satisfy Victorian moral demands? Strictly speaking the answer must be yes. But the mental torment he experiences is credible in terms of his reaction to Edith's rejection - his realization that not only has he sacrificed everything and gained nothing, but also that his final predicament is the result of his own actions. Carker's fate is not a superimposed judgement external to his character, but develops from within it and his actions in the novel.

As Dickens moved toward a more complex view of human action and motivation his views on madness became increasingly more subtle. Criminal madness is no longer merely the consequence of a crime but often the cause of it. In the later novels, the potentiality for both madness and crime is shown beneath the surface of respectable everyday people and their madness is in part the cause of their crime. This is partly the result of Dickens no longer viewing criminals as completely separate people from the rest of society and easily discernible as such. The criminals still have a separate way of thinking, but this is not immediately obvious from their outward appearance. They have a duality about them and they are an extension of the concept of the double.

While these characters are still regarded as abnormal by their

very acts of crime, and while they receive no more real sympathy than the earlier villains, there is a conscious attempt to understand and explain (but not forgive) their way of thinking. This has nothing to do with the debate on the criminal responsibility of the insane. It is more an attempt, in terms of nineteenth-century thought, to explain evil as arising from conflicts in the mind rather than as an external characteristic imparted to characters and explained within a moral framework. The evil in Sikes, for example, had been seen simply in terms of the moral value system of melodrama. He was bad because such wicked men do exist. This was thought to be sufficient explanation in itself. The environment within which he dwelt, while it had the propensity to corrupt others is not shown as corrupting him, nor is there any real conflict between himself and the values of the world in which he lives. By implication he seems to have been born irredeemably bad; certainly he has become so by the time of the action of the novel. But characters like Bradley Headstone and John Jasper are not bad nor are they obviously wicked in appearance. So, they are neither obvious villains nor obvious criminals. In fact, their key-notes are their respectability and their ability to carry on two totally different lives simultaneously. Dickens uses a more introspective method, as he had begun to do with Carker, to describe these near-mad characters without any precise definition as to the type or extent of their madness. He shows the mental instability beneath the surface of these men before they actually commit any crime, with the result that madness lost its purely retributive aspects.

In the case of Bradley Headstone, the turbulence is only scarcely concealed beneath the surface and his frustration at Lizzie Hexam's rejection, together with his anger at Eugene Wrayburn's insolence,

suffices to bring the turbulence to the foreground. Much of Bradley's initial disturbance is the result of his concern about his own respectability. In his first appearance in the novel much is made of his decency of appearance and this is reinforced throughout the novel by Dickens's recurrent use of the word 'decent' in reference to him. Together with this is the repetition of the word 'mechanical' to explain the means whereby his knowledge and reasoning powers had been apparently obtained. The implication is strong that such mechanical decency had been at the expense of more passionate aspects of character:

> Suppression of so much to make room for so much had given him a constrained manner, over and above. Yet there was enough of what was animal, and of what was fiery (though smouldering), still visible in him ....[1]

In fact Bradley's suppressed passions are ready to erupt and it was this potential violence that made him dangerous, a point observed by Jenny Wren when she likens him to a lot of gunpowder, likely to blow up at any moment and perhaps take others with him (II.11). Repeatedly we see him ill at ease and much of this suppression of emotional growth seems to be the result of education:

> Natures like his, originally cold and still further repressed by the routine of a dry and formal education, are no doubt especially liable to outbreaks of ungovernable passion when some great emotion at length sweeps away the old habit of self-control.[2]

Bradley's respectability is seen as incidental and accidental to his character, something he has acquired along with his learning.

Education has given Bradley only a superficial respectability; given the right stimulus his true nature may arise. But the problem remains as to how much his true nature was warped by the education

1. Charles Dickens, Our Mutual Friend, ed. Stephen Gill (1865 ; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), II.1.
2. Unsigned review of Our Mutual Friend, London Review, 28 October 1865, pp. 467-68, repr. in Dickens: The Critical Heritage, p. 457.

he received and the resulting stress caused by the ambiguity in his social position; and how much was due to some inherent madness within himself. There is a bifurcation in Dickens's attitude here, but Dickens avoids exploration of this bifurcation by withdrawing sympathy from Bradley. There is no sympathetic viewpoint from which Bradley's position can be regarded. He is shown as suffering two fold in attaining his position. He is the victim of both the lower-class prejudices against a man who deserts his own kind (exemplified by Gaffer Hexam's attitude to education) and the prejudice of the middle class who see him as a man who has risen above his station. The resultant dilemma is detailed by Dickens and in so far as it is exemplary of prevailing social attitudes it is fair enough. But Dickens's own attitudes, with all their contradictions intrude as well. While Gaffer's prejudice is obviously to be deplored, the effect of education on Charlie would seem to make his attitude justified; and in the portrayal of the conflict between Bradley and Eugene, Dickens openly sides with the middle-class prejudice and insolence embodied in the latter.

Despite directions and indications to the contrary on the part of Dickens, Bradley's condition is as much the result of his victimization by society as the result of his own inherent bad nature. Responses become complicated by the fact that his rival enjoys an unearned social position, and although conscious of it, has the arrogant self-possession of one who is confident in that position. In another novel the idleness of this man would be condemned, but much is forgiven Eugene both in general terms and in terms of his relationship with and attitude toward Bradley.

The first meeting between the two is crucial to an understanding of both.[1] It is marred, to a certain extent, by the fact that

we are invited to accept Eugene's view of the situation at the expense of Bradley's. The scene starts with both characters contemptuous of each other:

> It was a cruel look, in its cold disdain of him, as a creature of no worth. The schoolmaster looked at him, and that, too, was a cruel look, though of the different kind, that it had a raging jealousy and fiery wrath in it. [II. 6]

Under such circumstances, Eugene soon gains the upperhand and his mocking of Bradley's decency and respectability by referring to him as the 'schoolmaster' is particularly galling to Bradley since the opportunity to use it had been the result of his own incautious anger. The original subject, Charlie's concern over Lizzie, is soon submerged by the rivalry between Bradley and Eugene, and by Bradley's own fears. Although Eugene's baiting is insolent and indolent, the dialogue reveals that much of the trouble occurs through Bradley's own paranoia and through insistence that his birth and position have been flung in his face. Eugene can rightly, if flippantly, comment to Lightwood that Headstone appears 'A curious monomaniac ....The man seems to believe that everybody was acquainted with his mother!' (II.6).

Obviously self-control is preferable to the lack of it, but a self-control that is indifferent to others as human beings is not so preferable, and, in a sense, is as inhuman as irrational uncontrollability. In this scene, with its final tacit acceptance of Eugene's actions, the two aspects of self-control become entwined and modify our response, for Headstone's rage, (as distinct from

1. The scene has received the attention of several critics, starting with Henry James who reviewed the book when it first appeared and found the conception of the friction between the two men weak: The Nation,(21 December 1865), pp. 786-87; repr. in James's The House of Fiction, ed. Leon Edel (London: Hart-Davis, 1957), pp. 256-57, and Views and Reviews (1908; New York: Ams Press, 1969), pp. 158-59; and in Dickens: The Critical Heritage, ed. Philip Collins, p. 472. See also, Collins, Dickens and Education, pp. 165-66, and Lucas, pp. 327-28.

what he takes to be the cause of it, though incautious, would appear to be justified. Moreover, the implication throughout the dialogue (and elsewhere) that the educational profession stands condemned by the condemnation of its representative, Headstone, is hardly fair. Headstone is passionate because that is the sort of person he is, not because of his education, but Dickens seems to oscillate between the two causes.

In terms of Headstone's own character, however, the uncontrolled, irrational and obsessive side of his nature, lying beneath the respectable exterior, is revealed. This contrast is further developed in the novel until the appearance of Rogue Riderhood at the school after Bradley's attempted murder - an appearance that symbolizes the union of the two aspects in Headstone and the final loss of the respectable side.

After the interview with Eugene, Bradley's actions are motivated as much by his obsession with Eugene as by his love of Lizzie.[1] Eugene of course makes sport of it (having so little else to do), but in so doing, and in his failure to regard Headstone as a person at all, he fails to recognize the 'gunpowder' element in Headstone that Jenny Wren had so acutely observed. Headstone again appears at a disadvantage in his interview with Lizzie, when, after his rejection, his actions and thoughts become ungovernable and unconcealed:

> 'Then', said he, suddenly changing his tone and turning to her, and bringing his clenched hand down upon the stone with a force that had laid the knuckles raw and bleeding; 'then I hope that I may never kill him!' [II.15]

Bradley's passionate anger is further incensed by Eugene's toying with it by leading him all over London and suddenly turning

1. A point noted by Geoffrey Thurley, The Dickens Myth (St. Lucia, Queensland: Queensland University Press, 1976), pp. 334-35.

upon him as if unaware of his existence. Eugene takes Lightwood with him on one such excursion, whereupon Lightwood sees Bradley

> Looking like the hunted, and not the hunter, baffled, worn, with the exhaustion of deferred hope and consuming hate and anger in his face, white-lipped, wild-eyed, draggle-haired, seamed with jealousy and anger, and torturing himself with the conviction that he showed it all and they exulted in it .... [III.10]

Dickens stresses the hate, anger and compulsive nature of Bradley's actions by contrasting it with Eugene's cool and calculated provoking of him. Though Eugene fails to see it, Bradley's madness is the fearful type of madness (which had been the type exploited by Gothic novelists and by those Victorian novelists who used it to create sensational terror): it is explicity stated that Bradley cannot help himself. Thus, the manifestation of his madness becomes unpredictable, despite Eugene's belief that he can goad him to predictable responses - a belief proved false in the fact of the physical attack upon him; an attack which both ends Eugene's complacency and brings him, much to Bradley's annoyance, closer to Lizzie.

This fearful aspect of madness is made more frightening by the fact that to all outward appearances, and in his actions by day, Bradley is still respectable and sane. But such sanity is becoming precarious:

> The state of the man was murderous, and he knew it. More; he irritated it, with a kind of perverse pleasure akin to that which a sick man sometimes has in irritating a wound upon his body. Tied up all day with his disciplined show upon him subdued to the performance of his routine of educational tricks, encircled by a gabbling crowd, he broke loose at night, like an ill-tamed wild animal. [III.11]

Part of this compulsion to feed upon his wrath and hatred is due to the desire to give vent to those aspects of his personality that he suppresses when he methodically dresses in his decent black coat, waistcoat and tie, and wears his decent silver watch.

Symbolically therefore, when bent on murder he discards his clothes of respectability for those of Riderhood, and in so doing adopts the roguery of the latter, who by this time has become, in effect, his double:

> And whereas, in his own schoolmaster clothes, he usually looked as if they were the clothes of some other man, he now looked, in the clothes of some other man or men, as if they were his own. [IV.1]

Bradley's double nature and his increasingly mad obsessions have been well established before he actually commits any crime. By confining his mad activities to the night and his respectable ones to the daytime he had successfully kept the two aspects of his character separate. But his attempt to reconcile the two aspects - the depths of his mind and his surface appearance - ends in failure and destruction. By suppressing his more essential nature it ends by overwhelming his false respectable self; and in this aspect he reflects one of the themes of the novel, the difference between reality and surface. But the reality in Bradley's case was asocial and destructive[1] and hence the surface of respectability would seem preferable for both Bradley and the society in which he lived.

What Bradley needs is to combine his passionate self with the respectable surface he exhibits as a schoolmaster. Some fusion of the various aspects of his character needs to be achieved whereby each side can operate as a modifying factor on the other, rather than remain distinct. The progress of his extreme passion to the point of madness is all the more rapid through his having suppressed those aspects of his character for so long. It is so rapid in fact that his respectable, rational self - a 'self' that Dickens maintains had always rested uneasily on him - has no power to modify

1. J. Hillis Miller, Charles Dickens: The World of his Novels (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp. 302-03.

his irrational impulses.

The whole psychological conflict within Bradley is further explained by the use of a double figure, Rogue Riderhood, to reflect one aspect of his character. This use of the double is skilfully analysed by Lauriat Lane and there is nothing that can be usefully added to his discussion.[1] In presenting the divided soul of Bradley, Dickens blends two techniques. Not only does Bradley take on another identity to do his crime, but also he is later haunted by an external double who embodies that other identity. The initial symbolism of Headstone's appearance is reinforced by the symbolism of the external double, in destroying whom Bradley also destroys himself. These two essentially poetic devices blend with and reinforce the real psychological conflict within Headstone himself.[2]

Bradley's inability to reconcile the aspects of himself, and his compulsive-obsessive behaviour lead to the attempted murder of Eugene and ultimately, via association with Riderhood, to his own death. After the attack on Eugene we see a further disintegration in his character, a disintegration common to many of the presentations of criminals in the period. He is now obsessed by his deed and what was to give mental relief only gives further anguish. He re-lives the crime in his consciousness so frequently that his darker self intrudes into the daylight aspects of his character. As he heard his classes, he was always doing the deed and doing it better (IV.7).

But the basic cause of madness in Bradley remains a problem, as does the actual nature of that madness. Philip Collins saw this problem:

The nature of his abnormality - whether schizophrenic, repressed

1. Lane, 'Dickens and the Double', pp. 47-55.
2. Lane, 'Dickens and the Double', p. 52.

> homo- or hetero-sexuality - is never, I think explained, understood or adumbrated by Dickens; but certain phases of his mounting rage against Eugene and of his growing determination to kill him, are depicted with great force and insight.[1]

Since Dickens delighted to probe the mind of the criminal and explore the fears and guilts which prompt murder and condition response to it (as he had done already with Jonas Chuzzlewit), he became involved in describing the process of a mind contemplating murder. It was a fascination in itself; it was not meant to condone the crime, nor to elicit more sympathy for the criminal. Perhaps Dickens's fear that it may have done so caused his continual disparagement of Bradley.[2]

Dickens, like Lytton, Collins and Reade, avoided the question of madness and criminal responsibility, even though his explorations pointed in this direction. That was more the province of the clinical-medical discussions and became an issue with the growing pyschiatric profession. Nevertheless, interest in the actual processes of the mind, and closer study of it from the point of view of subject rather than seeing the criminal as a distant object - almost as a different species - did lead to an imaginative understanding of the criminal mind.

It also raised the question of the causes of both insanity and the crimes that resulted from it. This was even more evident in the criminals from respectable stations in life since their very position in society removed some of the social responsibility for

1. Collins, Dickens and Crime, p. 285. Although Bradley's psychosis is not clearly defined, Joel Brattin, 'Dickens' Creation of Headstone', Dickens Studies Annual, 14 (1985), pp. 147-65, demonstrates that the many revisions in Dickens's holograph manuscript show the conscious care Dickens took to try and adequately express Bradley's state of mind.
2. P.J.M. Scott, Reality and Comic Confidence in Charles Dickens (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 41, notes that Dickens's language is most 'inert' when he attempts to deride the schoolmaster, and most 'alive' when he simply presents him in an immediate way.

crime: society could be blamed for the squalor in which lower-class criminals existed and which in part caused their way of life and drove them to near-madness, but characters like Headstone and Jasper are not underprivileged (comparatively). Neither the cause of their madness nor the extent to which they themselves are responsible for it is clearly delineated by Dickens. Instead, he consistently presents the attitude that however uncontrolled the passions and madness, the wickedness that caused it could have initially been prevented. In this, attitude and presentation are at variance. Dickens's presentation of Bradley, for example, makes it evident that Bradley could not control his passions. But Dickens's attitude is such that he consistently implies that he ought to do so. It is this attitude that led Dyson to believe that the tormented minds of the criminals in Dickens's work reveal that Dickens regarded madness as almost self-induced, the final and worst stage of an evil will.[1]

Yet in attempting to portray the workings of such minds, authors like Dickens did at least humanize the criminal, as distinct from romanticising him as Ainsworth, for example, had done. There was a dilemma here for authors, since humanization, and increasing realism in portrayal of the criminal and the madness he suffered, evoked a sympathy for the criminal which could be misconstrued as sympathy for the crime. Hence the intrusions into the novels by the authors in their own persons, and the tendency to retreat into ambiguity rather than follow some of the ideas to their logical conclusions.

That there was something insane in the criminal mind Dickens never

1. Dyson, The Inimitable Dickens, p. 286.

doubted. To depict the various levels of consciousness that he believed were indicative of a degree of insanity, he used variations on the concept of the double. His most extended use of this was with John Jasper in The Mystery of Edwin Drood. Like Headstone, Jasper is respectable and like him he leads a double life. His doubts are rather about whether being respectable is worth while at all. In both cases their inner dilemmas are brought to crisis by a love situation, but in both the love situation is more the occasion rather than the cause of their madness. About the actual cause Dickens is less specific: he relies on hints and suggestions which are not always fully worked out.

In Bradley's case there is the suggestion that his rigid educational training suppressed much that was passionate and 'natural' to his character. As I have shown, the issue of education is contradictory in the novel, and if passion and madness are somehow natural to Bradley then we have again the belief in innate evil and violence in a character, and in an innate tendency to madness - what in modern terms we would call a psychopathic personality. His propensity for irrational behaviour is expressed as much through the use of an external double as through an exploration of his own consciousness.

With John Jasper, Dickens abandons the external double and suggests Jasper's dual nature by the use of the liberating effects of opium, sinister allusions to Jasper as meaning the opposite to what he actually says, vague hints and fears on the part of Edwin and Rosa, suggestions of hypnotic power: all of which suggest that the inner Jasper, in seeking a less inhibited type of life, is a quite different person from the outward respectable one he presents to society. What is not so clear is the actual type of liberated life Jasper seeks, and to what extent he is conscious

of the two different aspects of his personality.

Jasper's moral deterioration, loss of grip on reality, and alienation from society have begun before the novel commences. Symbolically, the opening shows him in the last stages of an opium vision, trying to assimilate two totally different sets of values: the Christian ethos, with all that it stood for, and the exotic, cruel and barbaric eastern sultanate culture, with the supposedly less civilised values that it represented.[1] Although the vision is drug-induced it serves the artistic purpose of showing, in an exaggerated form, a basic conflict within Jasper's mind. Opium is clearly meant to be an agent and not a cause. Opium-taking and the images it produces are a symbol of the release of an inner imaginative consciousness that existed in Jasper all the time. Thus it is not a cause of the consciousness but rather a means whereby that consciousness is clearly manifested.[2]

By starting the novel in the way he does, Dickens locates the interest where it is to remain - in the presentation of the mind of Jasper. The duality in Jasper has become a central thematic concern.[3] It is not, however, a simple duality of good and bad. To see good in Jasper is to go beyond the limits of the novel.[4] It cannot be asserted, for example, that if Jasper were not partly good then the good characters would not like him. Crisparkle sees

1. A.O.J. Cockshut, 'Edwin Drood: Early and Late Dickens Reconciled', in Dickens and the Twentieth Century, ed. John Gross and Gabriel Pearson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 227-38, took the opening dream to represent in Jasper's personality a clash between two cultures and between old and new - the unreconciled forces of which were to destroy him.
2. For an interpretation that emphasises the use of opium as a means of expressing social realities rather than as revealing Jasper's private consciousness, see Hollington, pp. 238-44.
3. This was noted as early as 1940 by Edmund Wilson, whose discussion is found in The Wound and the Bow, pp. 75-93.
4. A point made by Collins in refuting Wilson's contention that the duality was one between good and bad. Collins's discussion is in Dickens and Crime, ch. 12, especially pp. 303-12.

the best in everybody and carries his religious convictions into practice (unlike any of the other religious characters in the novel), Mr Grewgious's attitude is ambiguous, Edwin's return of affection is hardly evidence since it is clear that he is a particularly shallow individual - he doesn't even know what exactly Jasper's position in the church is - and he admits himself that he is a little afraid of his uncle when he fears to tell him of the broken engagement.[1] Rosa consistently fears him, and Helena Landless's response of 'No Wonder' to Edwin's remark that Jasper's conscientiousness makes Rosa 'afraid of you, No wonder' (ch.7), indicates that she believes Rosa's fears to be justified.

Nor can goodness be explained in terms of the respect held for Jasper in the community. Apart from the fact that respect in the community is no real standard, as the elevation of that windbag of egotistical nonsense, Mr Sapsea, all too clearly shows, surely it is precisely Dickens's point that murderous feelings and evil intentions can exist below and be cloaked by the facade of respectability. That it is a facade Jasper himself acknowledges when, in reply to Edwin's supposition that Jasper must feel fulfilment from his successful position in society and from his work with the choir, he asserts: 'I hate it. The cramped monotony of my existence grinds me away by the grain.' He goes on to add that the heavenly sounds of the church sound quite devlish to him and that he hates them (ch. 2). What Jasper's respectability does show is that he had the potential to become a constructive member of society had his own inner nature not rebelled and deviated from the values inherent in that respectability. It is this essential aspect in Jasper that can be linked to Macbeth, about whom implicit

1. Charles Dickens, The Mystery of Edwin Drood, ed. Margaret Cardwell (1870; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), ch. 13.

and explicit references abound in the novel, and who is likewise first seen in Shakespeare's play when his moral deterioration has already started.[1]

Philip Collins cautions against making too much of these parallels since parallels of the type abound in Dickens's work generally, particularly when Dickens was discussing murder, and both Shakespeare and Dickens were possibly saying the same inevitable things about murderers. Although the parallels in Edwin Drood are more explicit and insistent than before, Collins doubts whether they signify more than a fuller, because more appropriate, reminiscence of Shakespeare's most relevant, because most respectable, murderer.[2] What is relevant is that in Macbeth we have murder seen and analyzed from the murderer's point of view. It is this facet that I would stress as the reason for the conscious parallels to Macbeth in Edwin Drood. In both, the murder is close to the thematic centre of the work, and the murderer's mind and its effect on both himself and his surroundings is a basic theme. A subsidiary concern is the heightened effect achieved in both by the fact that murder is committed by a host and kinsman.

That we are in fact dealing with murder and not disappearance is, of course, one of the mysteries of the novel; it was intended to be so by virtue of the fact that the night in which the incident occurred is not described in the novel. In previous novels where the study of a criminal mind was of any importance we were clearly shown the motive for the crime (as well as its commission) before the forces of justice were brought into play. In this case, we

1. Most critics have made some passing reference to the echoes of Shakespeare's play in this novel. On the particular references, see Howard Duffield, 'The Macbeth Motif in Edwin Drood', The Dickensian, 30 (1934), pp. 263-71, and Collins, Dickens and Crime, pp. 299-300.
2. Collins, Dickens and Crime, p. 300.

are as much at a loss as the participants in the novel as to whether a successful crime has actually occurred. Neither this nor the motivation is made any more clear by studying the contradictory attitudes of Jasper himself.

It was not, however, intended to remain a mystery; that it does is due only to the unfinished state of the novel. Accordingly there has been speculation as to whether the murder occurred or not, or whether indeed it was intended or not. That it was intended I believe is sufficiently indicated in the novel as we have it - as indeed is the view or assumption of most recent critics. What critics cannot agree upon is the purpose of the book in general and of Jasper's character in particular. Much of the debate has been influenced by hypothetical reconstructions of the unfinished portion. Since my main concern is with the madness of Jasper, I do not intend to discuss aspects beyond those immediately suggested in the extant portion. That Jasper is a murderer (in thought, if not in deed) is suggested in several ways: his close knowledge of Edwin's jewellery; his promotion of the row between Neville and Edwin - not only through the drink which required 'much mixing and compounding', but by his verbal incendiary remarks as well - and the publication of that row afterwards (ch. 8); his keeping of a diary expressive of his supposed exaggerated fears (ch. 10); his reaction to Crisparkle's request for a reconciliation between Edwin and Neville when his face 'seemed to denote (which could hardly be) some close internal calculation (ch. 10); his secret moonlight excursion with Durdles among the tomb vaults, on which occasion Dickens poses the question, 'Can there be any sympathetic reason crouching darkly within him' for his soft and stealthy manner (ch. 12); his secret watching of Neville with 'a sense of destructive power'

on his face (ch. 12); and his many double entendres in response to Crisparkle, Mr Grewgious and Durdles.

As a murderer from the respectable ranks of society, Jasper is a continuation and extension of the type portrayed by Headstone. He is more sure of his own respectability than was Headstone, but also much more cynical about it.[1] Moreover, he no longer seeks to repress his inner escapist and destructive urges, but consciously tries to explore them through opium, possessive love, hypnotism and the ultimate act of defiance against society and life, a carefully planned murder. The process of achieving this escape and at the same time maintaining a respectable facade, and the conflicting demands of the two is now the central point; with Headstone it had been the end point of his development, a development which was itself only part of the overall scheme in Our Mutual Friend.

That the facade is not always easy to maintain (and hence Jasper no consummate hypocrite) is evident in two key scenes; the scene when Mr Grewgious breaks the news to Jasper that Edwin had broken off the engagement with Rosa (ch. 15), and the scene when Jasper proposes to Rosa (ch. 19). In the former scene, the tormented conflict in Jasper is shown through his outward physical appearance to Grewgious. This builds up gradually to the point where 'Mr Grewgious heard a terrible shriek and saw no ghastly figure, sitting or standing; saw nothing but a heap of torn and miry clothes on the floor'.

In the latter scene, what appals Rosa most, is 'the contrast between the violence of his look and delivery, and the composure of his assumed attitude'. In his declaration he is slightly more

1. Collins, Dickens and Crime, pp. 298-99, discusses the various similarities as well as the differences between Headstone and Jasper.

subtle than was Headstone in Our Mutual Friend. Unlike Headstone, Jasper has more self-control at the outset over his attitude, if not over his facial features and 'convulsive hands'. The scene is notably awkward and has often been pronounced such by critics. This is mainly due to the fact that Dickens, in trying to express the passionate intensity of insane love, resorts to much rhetorical and melodramatic prose, and the whole scene becomes stagey. To show Jasper as barely under control and possessed of a 'mad love' that could make him murderous, Dickens used the exaggerated language of stage villains. Despite this presentation, it is clear that the intent is to show Jasper struggling to present his violent passion within the conventions of social decorum, and his inability to do this is not only marked by the height which his vehemence reaches but also by the fact that he has to assure Rosa that 'I am self-repressed again'.

In his intensity and in his murderous impulses, Jasper becomes a 'horrible wonder apart', with all the contradictions and perverse thinking implied in that phrase. With this new emphasis, the motive for murder is not nearly as important as the study of the mind that can commit it and of the murder's effect on that mind afterwards.

As a 'horrible wonder apart', Jasper is confused in his motives (or, at any rate, they are not fully explained in the first half of the novel). Certainly his love or desire to possess Rosa is part of his motive:

> 'I have made my confession that my love is mad. It is so mad that, had the ties between me and my dear lost boy been one silken thread less strong, I might have swept even him from your side when you favoured him.' [ch. 19]

But even the passionate intensity of this seems motivated more by some inner compulsion than by love in any accepted sense. He

is quite happy to have Rosa and her hatred. It seems that this is a symptom of the madness in Jasper rather than a cause of it. It is the same intensity of feeling that had led him to seek something other than the quiet life of Cloisterham, and it is also of a piece with his fierce pursuit of Neville, who had committed the 'inexpiable offence' of loving Rosa. But while this 'inexpiable offence' is one ostensible reason, he had begun that pursuit before he heard of Neville's aspirations to Rosa, and it was in keeping with his public affirmation that he would devote his life to discovering the murderer of his 'dear boy'. The latter is not the simple hypocrisy of a murderer looking after his own interest that Collins would have us recognise. What strikes me as consistent with the portrayal of Jasper in the novel is that he actually needs the stimulus and excitement of trying to 'pin' the murder on Neville. This has nothing to do with whether he believes Neville to be guilty or not. As is obvious in the scene with Rosa, clearly he did not.

What the pursuit of Neville provides for Jasper, apart from directing attention from himself as the murderer, is a goal beyond that of daily routine. In adhering to this purpose he became:

> Impassive, moody, solitary, resolute, concentrated on one idea, and on its attendant fixed purpose that he would share it with no fellow creature, he lived apart from human life. [ch. 23]

Jasper had experienced this isolation before the crime which was to be the ultimate pleasure for him. His alienation from society's values and his need to escape social reality were part of the reason for his use of opium in the first place. While now the spirit of Jasper was in moral accordance or interchange with nothing around him, this had also been so when he confided to Edwin 'before the occasion for his present inflexibility arose'. In this reminder,

Dickens stresses that Jasper's solitary state and borderline sanity - not the derangement of Dyson - was a condition before the crime and not a result of guilt after it.[1] Thus mental alienation and imbalance are seen as contributory factors toward crime. This imbalance created the intensity and desire for something more in Jasper, and it makes the murder not only possible but also very much an anticlimax when it does occur: 'I did it so often, and through such vast expanses of time, that when it was really done it seemed not worth the doing, it was done too soon' (ch. 23). Thus the murder was not in accord with his fantasy vision of it. It became a mean low thing like the ordinary monotonous world that he had tried to escape by the very act of murder.

Jasper's desire to escape monotony by his murder of Edwin is not incompatible with a genuine love for him. It is here that critics have been troubled. For if the two are incompatible, then Jasper is either a hypocrite or a schizophrenic. Certainly there are signs of hypocrisy, not only in his outward show in church, but also in his responses to Mr Sapsea and, at times, Crisparkle. But this hypocrisy is not directed toward Edwin, for whom his affection is explicitly homosexual:[2]

> Once for all, a look of intentness and intensity - a look of hungry, exacting, watchful, and yet devoted affection - is always, now and ever afterwards, on the Jasper face whenever the Jasper face is addressed in this direction. [ch. 2]

But this intense love can exist with a desire to destroy. It is precisely this conflict of desires that I believe Jasper tries to warn Edwin about, though the ambiguity of Jasper's warning leaves

1. In his discussion, Dyson, The Inimitable Dickens, pp. 287-92, amid much valuable comment, claims that Jasper has rejected reason and restraint to such an extent that he is incapable of love and trust.
2. On Jasper's homosexuality , see Thurley, pp. 334-35.

much in doubt. This love is not necessarily good, as those who seek a good side in Jasper would wish us to believe. Both the Dean and Mrs Toper believe that Jasper is too much wrapped up in his nephew - an indication that his affection is obsession rather than love. It is, in fact, another form of that intensity which characterises all Jasper's actions and reveals a mind, at the very least, unhinged. This intensity of affection toward Edwin has been noticed by several critics, some of whom have pointed out that just as Headstone had seemed more fascinated by Wrayburn than by Lizzie Hexam, Jasper seems more fascinated by Edwin than by Rosa.[1]

It is not, of course, the element of homosexuality that leads me to classify Jasper as unhinged, but rather the intensity and excessiveness of his feelings and his obsession with Edwin as the object of those feelings. A similar intensity is seen when he proposes to Rosa (ch. 19). What his actions do reveal, whatever the real state of his affections, is a struggle within him between love and hate, and this struggle, together with the double direction of his affections, suggests a sexual psychosis as a basis for his crime. How important a feature this was to be remains unresolved because the novel is unfinished, though given Victorian reticence it was unlikely to have been explicitly stressed.

The desire to see Jasper's love of his nephew as a good quality is an aspect of those critics who wish to see Jasper as a split personality divided between good and bad, and therefore a type of schizophrenic.[2] There is no evidence of schizophrenia even in

1. In particular, see Thurley, pp. 334-35; Lane, 'Dickens and the Double', p. 54; Collins, Dickens and Crime, p. 299; and A.J. Cox, 'The Morals of Edwin Drood', The Dickensian, 58 (1962), pp. 35-38.
2. The idea that a 'split personality' is a symptom of schizophrenia is popular fallacy. On the actual symptoms of schizophrenia,

the inaccurate sense in which these critics use it - a clear division whereby one side of Jasper is good and respectable (involving his love for Edwin and his position in the community) and one side is evil and commits murder (linked to, and symbolised by, the opium self). As I have shown, good is not to be equated with respectability, and his love is, if anything, a bad quality because of its excessiveness. Thus such a neat equation breaks down. Moreover, Jasper plans and enjoys the murder in both states, his everyday personality, and his opium state.

Both James Wright and Veronica Comyn see Jasper as a split personality divided within and against himself. As such he is representative of society as a whole, which is similarly divided.[1] Not only do they see a split, but they see that split as an unconscious one - a form of schizophrenia with two separate and distinct types of consciousness. Such a position leads to the conclusion made by Natalie Schroeder that if Jasper has two distinct states of consciousness (one good, one evil) and the two never clash, then only one part of him is guilty of the murder, while his other self remains innocent.[2] This is philosophically logical, but it is not in accord with Dickens's presentation. After the murder, Jasper is further haunted and alienated from society, and there is a general momentum of forces gathering to destroy him. Schroeder argues from the basis that earlier Dickens novels had

see Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry, ed. Michael Gelder, Dennis Gath and Richard Mayou (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 228-59.

1. James Wright, 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood', in Gross and Pearson, pp. 270-77, repr. from afterword to Signet Classics edition of Edwin Drood (New York: Signet, 1961), pp. 273-81. Wright's view is reproduced with only minor modifications by Veronica Comyn, 'John Jasper, Schizophrenic', Unisa English Studies, 13 (1975), pp. 1-5.
2. Natalie Schroeder, 'John Jasper: Hero-Villain', University of Mississippi Studies in English, n.s. 1 (1980), p. 59.

used an external double as a foil to the 'good' characters and that the good character was thus freed from the moral responsibility for a crime he subconsciously wished to commit.[1] This is undoubtedly true, and so is her assertion that the conflict is now completely internalized within Jasper himself. But again, the fundamental objection to her argument arises from the basic premise that the conflict is between good and bad.

Furthermore, the duality in Jasper does not necessitate distinct phases of being. Critics like Wright have used the seemingly innocent remark about Miss Twinkleton as the basis for their suppositions about Jasper:[2]

> As, in some cases of drunkenness, and in others of animal magnetism, there are two states of consciousness which never clash, but each of which pursues its separate course as though it were continuous instead of broken ..., so Miss Twinkleton has two distinct and separate phases of being. [ch. 3]

Dyson disavows this as having any analogy to Jasper's unconsciously divided mind.

> The split in him is not between two personalities, but between two deliberate personae - the respectable public self of Cloisterham and the exotic private self of Limehouse Den. At all times in his 'normal' life Jasper commands both personae.[3]

This interpretation is much more in keeping with the quotation for, after all, Miss Twinkleton's two states are just that - a public one for the pupils to witness and a private one which can admit of romance and scandal. In both cases she is her 'normal' self, and there is no suggestion that she is divided against her own nature. Nor have critics who use this analogy acknowledged that the two distinct phases can be reconciled. When Miss Twinkleton goes to London to stay with Rosa, Dickens remarks of her that:

1. On the development and gradual internalisation of the double with its attendant symbolism, see Lane, 'Dickens and the Double', pp. 47-55.
2. Dyson, The Inimitable Dickens, p. 288, makes this point.
3. Dyson, The Inimitable Dickens, p. 288.

> In a happy compromise between her two states of existence, she had already become, with her workbasket before her, the equably vivacious companion with a slight judicious flavouring of information .... [ch. 22]

What is dangerous for Jasper, as it had been for Headstone, is the fact that his two roles are almost mutually exclusive. He cannot - and he is aware of it in the beginning - reconcile his inner and outer selves.

The division is certainly one between a public role and a private one. This division is best discussed by Charles Mitchell who sees it as between an inner and outer self.[1] This is nothing to do with a good and bad conflict or with respectability, but rather with the ability to constructively communicate inner feelings into the outer world of other beings. For Mitchell, the inner man is that 'part of a person which determines his being as an entity separate from the world around him', whereas the outer man is 'that part of a man which provides him with a reality outside his individual consciousness of the world'.[2] What I find most appealing about Mitchell's interpretation is the fact that it explains the overall unity of the book in a way in which many other accounts do not, and is most in accord with the dream-like quality of the prose, with its semi-mystical happenings and those touches of the para-normal which seem to demand a poetic and symbolic interpretation rather than a prosaic one.

Briefly, Mitchell argues that in the ideal state, inner and outer self are so balanced that they cannot be distinguished analytically. Such a person is Crisparkle. But in fallen man the two become separate. There is a danger in losing contact with the inner self as many characters in Dickens's earlier novels had

1. Charles Mitchell, 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood: The Interior and Exterior Self', ELH, 33 (1966), pp. 228-46.
2. Mitchell, p. 228.

done and as, in this novel, Edwin, Durdles and Mr Sapsea have all done. With Edwin, however, the beginning of a reconciliation with an inner self had just begun during his last meeting with Rosa.

There is an equal danger in losing contact with the outer self by withdrawing into interior reality. This is what Jasper has done. The use of opium is thus a means toward an end, rather than an escapist end in itself, and it is appropriate that we start the novel by experiencing the interior reality of Jasper. Much of Jasper's problem lies in his discovering a means of relating his interior reality to the external world. His increasing failure to do so is indicative of his increasing lack of control over his inner consciousness. Mitchell sees the novel as a symbolic metaphor for the realisation and attainment of one's identity as a composite of inner identity (imagination, dreams, unrelated self) and outer identity (surface realities and objective existences).

Jasper fails to obtain a unified identity since, in pursuance of the aims and purposes of an imaginative inner dream, he fails to feed his experience back into the outer world in any meaningful way. Instead, he seeks to encompass the outer world only in terms of his own inner self. Hence the murder of Edwin, the use of hypnotic powers, and his avowal of love to Rosa, all of which are basically antisocial forms of expression. Mitchell's interpretation has the value of by-passing any good and bad antithesis. Search into one's self is not in itself bad: it only becomes so when it fails to re-establish contact with the outer world through an outer self, even though elements of that outer world are themselves corrupt. The loss of a whole and complete identity is the form which Jasper's madness takes.

Whether Jasper is seen as a schizophrenic or as a type of dual

personality, and irrespective of the social, religious, psychological and symbolic purposes for which that duality is believed to be shown, in all the interpretations that I have been reviewing, Jasper is seen as abnormal. Dickens was striving to portray what he regarded as a totally different type of mind. As he says of Rosa, after her confrontation with Jasper,

> In short, the poor girl (for what could she know of the criminal intellect, which its own professed students perpetually misread, because they persist in trying to reconcile it with the average intellect of average men, instead of identifying it as a horrible wonder apart), could get by no road to any other conclusion than that he <u>was</u> a terrible man, and must be fled from [ch. 20]

This is the key to Dickens's thinking on criminals; they were a 'horrible wonder apart', and it is this aspect that Dyson stresses when he insists that Jasper 'is mad only as he drives himself mad, and he drives himself mad through evil designs'.[1] Thus Jasper is just a more thorough study of that madness which was thought to be an essential part of the criminal's makeup and which Dickens had begun to portray as existing before a crime and not just as a result of it. In fact, much of the psychopathic quality in Jasper appears from the fact that he derives most enjoyment from planning and imagining the crime. He is, however, at once more complex and more diversely motivated than the earlier criminals in Dickens's work.

In his rebellion against the norms of society, Jasper is a study of the ultimate effect of intense inward-looking individualism, as well as a study of a particular maladjustment. He is also, therefore, a comment on the society in which he lived as well as a comment on the possibility of other forms of experience and expression - eastern mysticism, hypnotism, opium vision and criminal experience. Ultimately, however, it is difficult to see where

1. Dyson, <u>The Inimitable Dickens</u>, p. 285.

all this imagery and symbolism were to lead and what was to be the relative value of the various facets. For though Jasper rejects the church (symbol of respectability and religion), that church is seen as deadening, not only in the claustrophobia of the Cathedral City, but also in its representatives. The Dean's hedging over Crisparkle's support of Neville, whom he believed to be innocent is a sufficient example of this. In such a state, it is hardly wrong of Jasper to reject the church. Dyson's arguments (among others) suffer from the assumption that to reject the twin pillars of society - church and state - was in itself a sign of derangement. This is to oversimplify, for, as I have shown, the church and the state (the latter seen in its representative, Mr Sapsea and the 'respectable' citizens who pursue and accost Neville) are shown as very much wanting in this novel, and not just from Jasper's viewpoint alone. A rejection of them is neither necessarily bad nor necessarily a sign of madness. But what Jasper also seems to deny is part of himself - not, I repeat, simply a virtuous part, but the part which linked him with his fellow man.

The extent to which society and its values could be held responsible for the maladjustment of such criminal characters as Jasper, and hence the extent to which their rebellion against it was justified, was a moral question which Dickens, like other Victorian novelists, avoided. This question he tackled more freely with semi-deranged and mad characters from whom the element of criminality was absent. With such characters, society could be more unequivocally blamed for being partly responsible for the madness within it.

CHAPTER IV

DICKENS, MADNESS AND THE NOVEL OF SOCIAL ATTACK

Perhaps the most characteristic feature of the first quarter of Victoria's reign was the superimposition of reformist and progressive ideas on a society deeply imbued with a sense of tradition. There was a firm belief that the ills of society could be remedied simply by better organisation and legislation. Debates centred on the most efficient types of reform and how those reforms could best be implemented. But, by the 1850s early-Victorian optimism about reform was beginning to give way to doubts as to whether real reform was possible. Despite legislation on specific evils, many social problems had not been solved. Indeed, some of the measures taken to alleviate social injustices had actually created fresh controversies. The problems in society appeared so diverse and so deeply entrenched in the social structure, that the Victorians were no longer confident that their problems could be easily solved. All kinds of social organisation and reforms were then called in question. As the resulting society grew more complex, accepted and traditional values were themselves challenged. Doubts about the efficacy of the social system were compounded by uncertainty concerning the philosophical basis of society itself. New anxieties and conflicts were generated as a religious based ethic began to be superseded by a scientifically based humanist one.[1]

In their works, Victorian novelists enacted the contemporary

1. I realize, of course, that this is a simplification of the sociological developments in early and mid-Victorian England. For detailed discussions of those developments, see J.H. Buckley, The Victorian Temper (London: Allen & Unwin, 1952), W.E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), R.D. Altick, Victorian People and Ideas (New York: Norton, 1973), and Laurence Lerner (ed.), The Victorians (London: Methuen, 1978).

sociological debates, confusions and doubts. Authors like Charles Reade and Wilkie Collins made direct attacks on particular social injustices and used these attacks as an aesthetic justification for the more lurid scenes in their 'sensation' novels. However, in less obvious ways, most major Victorian novelists (including novelists as diverse in temperament and style as Anthony Trollope and Charles Dickens), showed an increasing awareness of the effect of society's values on individual characters; an awareness heightened by their attempts to assign to characters significant roles within the social frameworks of their novels, and their portrayal of the alienation of characters who failed to discover such roles.

The focusing of interest on individuals in a particular environment led to the decline of the hero-figure whose basic characteristic was his ability to withstand any amount of social pressure.[1] More importantly, it led to a developing interest in the mind of the individual and the effects of social conditions on that mind. An early indication of this came in the interest shown by authors in the mind of the criminal. But co-incident with this, and in part as a result of it, there developed an interest in the non-criminal mind struggling against adverse circumstances, and often cracking under the weight of that struggle. To expose what they saw as the evils of various social institutions, novelists often presented characters undergoing mental disturbance as a result of injustices done to them by those institutions.

The most extreme form of this was to show the individual as reduced to semi-derangement or madness, a madness that is not simply

1. Although such characters still persisted to the end of the century, particularly in the more sensational novels, they were no longer the real centre of interest. On the decline of the hero figure, see Mario Praz, The Hero in Eclipse, trans. Angus Davidson (London: Oxford University Press, 1956).

the result of the individual's own moral corruption. There is an effort by novelists to see the lunatic in terms other than moral ones - neither as the holy fool nor as a reflection of moral corruption. In this they reflected the advances that were being made in psychiatric medicine. Although precise medical delineation of psychotic states was not their aim, the increasing detail with which authors like Dickens described the mental deterioration or impairment of their characters revealed some understanding of the complexity and variety of psychotic conditions. Madness became less conventional in both its presentation and use. Such efforts were tentative at first and what is not clear is the extent to which the pressures of society were held responsible and the extent to which the individual's own perversity was seen as a contributory cause of the madness.

In their presentation of madness in the criminal mind, the novelists side-stepped the extent to which environmental factors could be held responsible for the criminal's mental state and subsequent actions by viewing crime as a social aberration, irrespective of environmental conditioning. In the case of non-criminals the authors were more outspoken on the effects of the environment on the individual, but here too there is much ambiguity still evident.

The concern with social problems of this type pervades the works of Dickens. An early example is his portrayal of the husband of the woman who died of starvation in Oliver Twist. In his grief, the deranged husband asserts:

> 'I swear it before the God that saw it. They starved her.' He twined his hands in his hair; and, with a loud scream, rolled grovelling upon the floor: his eyes fixed: and the foam rushing from his lips. [ch. 5]

Melodramatic though this presentation of madness is, Dickens also

makes it clear that the man's derangement, while being the immediate result of grief, had its primary cause in the poverty and unemployment that had caused the family to starve. Because of this, it forms part of Dickens's criticism of the inadequacy of the Poor Laws to relieve the plight of some individuals. The scene is, of course, only a minor episode in Dickens's indictment of the poor law system, and that indictment itself is superseded by other concerns in the novel.

A more extended use of madness to highlight a social problem occurs with his use of imbecility as a means of attacking the existence of such Yorkshire boarding schools as Squeers's in Nicholas Nickleby. When we are frst introduced to Squeers's school we see, through Nicholas's eyes, that the pupils are stunted and retarded physically, emotionally and mentally. Squeers's treatment of them under the guise of education is largely responsible for this, but the matter is complicated by the fact that some of the pupils were already physically deformed. Squeers cannot be held responsible for the children with irons on their legs, for those with hare lips or crooked feet, or for the 'young lives which, from the earliest dawn of infancy, had been one horrible endurance of cruelty and neglect'.[1] Others, originally physically sound and mentally alert, had through Squeers's treatment, become distorted. All, however, were social outcasts and rejects before Squeers received them: indeed, their initial rejection was the reason why many parents or guardians saw his establishment as a convenient repository for the children.

But under Squeers's treatment and his parody of education they certainly further degenerated. The extent of this degeneration

1. Charles Dickens, Nicholas Nickleby, ed. Michael Slater (1839; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), ch. 8.

is focused upon Smike, the longest held inmate who, although nineteen years old, has a comprehension level below that of a nine year old (ch. 12). The extent to which Squeers's treatment is responsible for this is not fully explored: it is simply implied as the basic cause. Part of the vagueness comes from Smike's role in the novel. His function has overtones of the idiot figure whose chief characteristic is his innate idiocy. In his capacity as follower, foil and dependent of Nicholas, Smike further reflects the fool figure, but he lacks the latter's wisdom.

Although Smike himself sees the school as largely responsible for his condition - 'I was always confused and giddy at that place ... and could never remember and sometimes couldn't even understand what they said to me' (ch. 22) - when he and Nicholas are settled in London there is only a limited improvement. As Miss La Creevy notices, he is now more conscious of his weak intellect, and it gives him pain to know that he wanders sometimes and cannot understand very simple things (ch. 38). Unlike Miss La Creevy, we know that Smike's melancholia has been further aggravated by his pathetic love of Kate and awareness of his own unsuitability for her. While Dickens wished to stress the irreversibility of the harm done to Smike at Squeers's school, the issue is clouded by the sentimentality in Dickens's presentation, a sentimentality that culminates in Smike's consumption, realization of a blood relationship, and death. It is suggested that the consumption is the result of his earlier treatment, but that is partly a contrivance of plot. Smike cannot be allowed to get better while his function is to be a foil to Nicholas, always showing gratitude for the kind treatment of the hero and thereby providing the hero with opportunities to display his own virtues. His death is a convenient means of removing him

from the plot, and it maximises the personal blame to fall upon Ralph Nickleby.[1]

As a comment on the reduction to imbecility of an individual through bad education, Smike is unsatisfactory since much of his portrayal is dependent on other factors.[2] Nor does Dickens solve the problem of the suffering caused by such institutions as Squeers's school. Dotheboys Hall breaks up for the irrelevant reason that Squeers is transported for having forged a will, which has nothing to do with his role as a schoolmaster.[3]

In his later novels Dickens uses madness more successfully as a 'metaphor for aspects of the human condition';[4] individual studies not only deepen the understanding of particular characters but are also emblematic of wider social issues. There is a shift from individual responsibility to social reponsibility, a move away from exposing particular incidents that caused madness to condemning the iniquity of a system that could drive people mad. Dickens began to lose confidence in easy solutions to social problems and madness became a means of stressing a character's alienation from the whole social structure, or at least from some fundamental

1. Collins, Dickens and Education, p. 175, notes that with Smike's death from consumption being attributed, like his weakness of mind, to the wickedness of his father and teacher, there is an emotional, if not strictly logical, connection between his death and his elders' sins of omission or commission.
2. Collins, Dickens and Education, pp. 108-09, contrasts the pathetic attitude consistently adopted towards Smike with the more effective comic tone used to expand upon the evils of Squeers's school, once the nature of those evils has been indicated in a short, serious paragraph. However, Dickens's contemporaries found Smike's suffering and death very moving and saw it as the main indictment against Yorkshire schools.
3. A point noted by Collins, Dickens and Education, p. 111. In general, the whole Yorkshire episode remains an episode. Reminders of it occur throughout the book, chiefly through the presence of Smike, but even this link is tenuous. At one point, when Squeers and Wackford happen to meet Smike in London and kidnap him (chs. 38, 39), the connection is obviously contrived.
4. Reed, p. 203.

component of it. The portrayal of madness became an effective means whereby he underscored his social attacks.

In Bleak House there is a sustained use of non-conventional madness to deepen the understanding of characters and to highlight the thematic structure. Madness is treated as an integral part of society and in some respects as an understandable consequence of participation in that society, specifically through involvement with a legal system which is failing in its function as the upholder of society. The character in whom such insanity is most obvious is Miss Flite. She is better integrated into the thematic structure of the novel and its symbolism than were the mad characters of Dickens's earlier works. In Nicholas Nickleby, for example, many of the eccentrics are presented for their intrinsic interest - separate sketches, amusing, loveable or frightening in themselves, but bearing no relationship to each other or to anything outside their immediate background. In Bleak House such characters are all related elements in a complex, tightly structured scene of blight and damnation. The importance of the eccentrics extends beyond themselves; they often present parallels with the major characters: Miss Flite and Gridley, for example, add extra dimensions and poignancy to Richard's downfall.[1]

Although Miss Flite was initially based on a real person, Dickens made modifications to the character to suit his own purposes.[2] Primarily, Miss Flite's character illustrates one of the disastrous results of a lengthy and hopeless law suit.[3] That the case is

1. Ann Roulet, 'A Comparative Study of Nicholas Nickleby and Bleak House', The Dickensian, 60 (1964), p. 120.
2. This was pointed out by John Butt, 'Bleak House Once More', Critical Quarterly, 1 (1959), pp. 303-04, where he quoted from Oddities of London Life (2 May 1838), II. 113-19.
3. Other consequences are suicide (Tom Jarndyce), death by exhaustion

irredeemably hopeless Dickens makes clear from the outset: 'Some say she really is, or was, a party to a suit; but no one knows for certain, because no one cares'.[1] And because no one cares the case has continued through generations, just as the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce has. In so doing, it had been the ruin of her father, brother and sister by way of debt, drunkenness and prostitution, and finally the ruin of herself by madness. What Miss Flite herself stresses is the ease with which otherwise sane people can be drawn by the lure of an unresolved case. 'I had often heard before, that this was all the work of Chancery. When I got better, I went to look at the monster. And then I found out how it was, and I was drawn to stay there' (ch. 35). Once there, she too degenerates.

> Right! Mad, young gentleman ... I was a ward myself. I was not mad at that time ... I had youth and hope. I believe, beauty. It matters very little now. Neither of the three served, or saved me. I have the honour to attend Court regularly. [ch. 3]

The fact that there existed a prototype for the character indicates that such effects are not just an exaggeration on Dickens's part. Not that this matters from a literary point of view, for she is symbolically and thematically significant. Her first appearance in the novel is her meeting with Richard, Esther and Ada when they first arrive in London (ch. 3), and the ominous conjunction of youth, beauty, Chancery and madness is begun. Progressive deterioration through involvement with the law is further signalled by the names Miss Flite gave to some of her caged birds: Hope, Joy, Youth, Peace, Rest, Life, Dust, Ashes, Waste, Want, Ruin,

(Gridley), poverty and disease (Jo, Esther). The disease results from the fact that Tom-all-Alones is in an insanitary condition because repairs are being delayed until the case concerning them is resolved.

1. Charles Dickens, Bleak House, ed. George Ford and Sylvère Monod (1853; New York: Norton, 1977), ch. 1.

Despair, Madness, Death' (ch. 14), to which she later prophetically adds 'The Wards of Jarndyce'.

As a symbol, Miss Flite is complemented by Gridley, the Man from Shropshire who has avoided madness by resorting to defiance and anger:

> ... if I took my wrongs in any other way, I should be driven mad! It is only by resenting them, and by revenging them in my mind, and by angrily demanding the justice I never get, that I am able to keep my wits together .... You may tell me that I over-excite myself .... There's nothing between doing it, and sinking into the smiling state of the poor little madwoman that haunts the Court. If I was once to sit down under it, I should become imbecile. [ch. 15]

The essential humanity of these characters is shown by their kindness to others, something which is in sharp contrast to the inhumanity and indifference they themselves experience at the hands of the court. But their humanity cannot save them.

What Miss Flite and Gridley also represent is the irreversibility of degeneration, once active involvement in a lawsuit has begun. As symbols, they foreshadow what Richard Carstone will become when he involves himself in the Chancery suit, and they prepare the reader for his progressive mental deterioration. Like Miss Flite, Richard received the suit as an inheritance, and the lure of its hopes had the effect of unsettling him from an early age (ch. 23). John Jarndyce acknowledges the unsettling nature of such an inheritance, but avoids becoming engulfed by the lawsuit by standing aloof from the case and the society of which it is part. Involvement in a case inevitably has the paralysing effect on the will that it shows with Miss Flite and Gridley. So Richard Carstone is led to hope that a settlement will occur in his favour, and for this reason he sees pursuit of any other vocation as pointless.

But other factors contribute too. Richard's character and education are such as to make him most susceptible to being drawn

unthinkingly into a futile suit. At the outset he has quick abilities, good spirits, good temper, gaiety and freshness. These admirable characteristics would make a hero in another novel, but here they work against him; his energies become channelled into a hopeless cause and his hopes become irrational ones. His ability to solve problems quickly has led him to believe that all problems can be easily resolved. Therefore he undertakes the case with youthful energy and determination, confident in his own ability to solve it. That the resolution depended on Chancery more than on his own determination does not occur to him, and even though he has been warned by the fate of others he makes the mistake of seeing their failure as the result of a lack of total commitment.

In contrast to his youthful determination were his carefree attitude to life and a tendency to procrastinate over important decisions. These characteristics had been fostered rather than corrected by an education that had instilled in him neither a disciplined mode of thinking nor a desire for achievement through sustained effort (ch. 17). Thus he tries medicine, the law and the army in succession, but without any determined purpose. Ironically, his decision to investigate the lawsuit does provide him with a settled purpose, but the pursuit of that purpose makes him only more unsettled.

Both character and circumstance, then, combine to produce the tragic disintegration of his personality. Dickens presents in detail the process that made Miss Flite the creature we see in the book and made Richard, while believing her to be mad, laugh at and pity her simultaneously (ch. 23). There is much irony in Richard's view of Miss Flite here. A kind of critical distance is added to his view of her through his finding her ridiculous,

but the quality of Richard's own view is called in question by being placed in the perspective of Esther's opinion of him. The result of refracting the vision of Chancery, here, first through Richard's view of Miss Flite's fate and then through Esther's view of Richard as a second victim, doubles the force of the irony.[1]

Esther's viewpoint enables us to be both detached and sympathetic as she pointedly observes that Richard, in his view of Miss Flite, never thought what 'a fatal link was rivetting between his fresh youth and her faded age, between his free hopes and her caged birds, and her hungry garret, and her wandering mind' (ch. 23). As the novel progresses, Richard moves ever closer to Miss Flite. Because of this, H.D. Sucksmith sees her as an ominous chorus on Chancery and an omen against youth, hope and beauty in general, and specifically against the wards present at the first meeting.[2] With this I would agree, except that I would regard Miss Flite more as a prophet than as a chorus, for, Cassandra-like, she is both a victim of the story and a commentator on it.

Miss Flite's role as prophetic commentator is evident in the warning she gives Esther:

> I know what will happen. I know, far better than they do, when the attraction has begun. I know the signs, my dear. I saw them begin in Gridley. And I saw them end ... I saw them beginning in our friend the Ward in Jarndyce. Let some one hold him back. Or he'll be drawn to ruin. [ch. 35]

But Richard is already beyond help, having moved too far along the path that Miss Flite herself has taken. In many respects so much the opposite of Miss Flite, 'in the clouded, eager, seeking look that passed over him', he is dreadfully like her (ch. 37). His care about himself lessens as he becomes absorbed in the case,

1. H.D. Sucksmith, The Narrative Art of Dickens (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 176.
2. Sucksmith, p. 209.

and he becomes slovenly and unkempt in appearance. The marriage to Ada stems the deterioration but cannot avert it. When Richard finally finds a purpose, it is a purpose founded in delusion. 'Call it madness, and I tell you I can't help it now, and can't be sane. But it is no such thing; it is the one object I have to pursue' (ch. 45). Thus the tragic twist. Being a ward of Chancery has been a principal reason for Richard's aimlessness, and taking up the case has given him an aim, but it leads to further ruin, aided and abetted by the predatory Vholes. Obsession with the case brings further delusions: he regards John Jarndyce as an enemy, believes that a judgement favourable to himself must come, and begins to pervert the motives of others.

Finally there is the ultimate delusion that links him to Miss Flite. From seeking the case as a means toward an end, he begins to seek the case in and for itself. Even as the court 'procrastinates, disappoints, tries, tortures him, wears out sanguine hopes thread by thread', he, like a compulsive gambler, 'still looks to it and harkens after it and finds his whole world treacherous and hollow' (ch. 34). This is the final cause of which Miss Flite speaks when she refers to the power of the mace and seal, that power of Chancery to ruin by means of its irresistible magnet attraction (ch. 35).[1] So there comes further deterioration into the singularity of purpose that is so marked a characteristic of Miss Flite. Esther finds Richard

> abstracted in his manner, forcing his spirits now and then, and at other intervals relapsing into a dull thoughtfulness. About his large bright eyes that used to be so merry, there was a wanness and a restlessness that changed them altogether. I cannot use the expression that he looked old. There is a ruin of youth which is not like age, and into such a ruin Richard's youth and youthful beauty had all fallen away.[ch. 60]

1. Hillis Miller, pp. 199-201, discusses this aspect.

This was the outward reflection of an inner instability. The mental obsession was far more painful. Richard's hopeful view of the case and his animation when he discussed it were more pitiful to Esther than his physical neglect. His obsession with the case leads him to attend the court even on days when there was not the remotest chance of the case being heard, and by his regularity of attendance he becomes another stock figure of the court like Gridley and Miss Flite. Like them, he has allowed his pursuit of a hopeless case to become his raison d'être, and, like them, he gains renewed incentive in the false hope of retrieving, by his persistence, what he has already lost (ch. 61).

But the hope of retrieving what he lost, or even of winning, becomes insufficient to sustain him; the discovery of a new will gives him a momentary excitement, 'but he had lost the elasticity even of hope now, and seemed ... to retain only its feverish anxieties' (ch. 64). Having lost the will to live, he dies. He had believed that either the suit must end or the suitor. In fact both end, and he gains his freedom only through death. He dies before completely losing his reason and this has the effect of reminding us what he might have been had his energies been directed elsewhere. Symbolically, Miss Flite sets her birds free since the Wards of Jarndyce are no longer caged by their lawsuit.

Edgar Johnson views Richard Carstone as a 'spirited sketch' - but only a sketch of psychological and moral deterioration.[1] In so far as he refers to the fact that Carstone is not drawn with the minute introspection and nuance of a psychological study that later became one of Dostoevsky's leading principles he is correct. But in the implication that the portrayal could or should have

1. Johnson, vol. 2, p. 767.

been so I think he is being less than fair. Its outline, such as it is, is sufficient for its purpose in the novel. It shows the breaking down of one individual as part of a wider group of people so affected - a group that includes Miss Flite and Gridley - and the three are only one facet of an even wider effect: the condition of Tom-all-alones is the result of an unresolved case, and a fever engendered there is transmitted, via Jo, to the rest of the community. And Chancery itself is only the legal aspect of a society in which much else has gone wrong also. To concentrate more fully on Richard Carstone would certainly have led to greater introspection, but it would also have created a different type of novel.

John Lucas has noted that Richard, Miss Flite and Gridley are all examples of the dream of breaking bondage to a system but that their dreams depend on the escapist notion of great expectations, a purely economic dream of freedom which destroys them. Paradoxically, these attempts to break from bondage succeed only in making them more enslaved than those characters who do not make the attempt.

> Dickens makes us aware of the pressure that can cause individuals to seek freedom. But he is no less aware of the cost; and Richard, Gridley and Miss Flite are all images of human beings for whom relationships have become unreal or warped.[1]

This brings me back to Miss Flite as the symbolic centre of this group. As well as being a symbol she is a character in her own right. We are not asked to accept her madness on trust, though the word 'mad' is used of her somewhat like a Homeric epithet, and she is seldom introduced without it. When Richard, Ada and

1. Lucas, p. 235. Thurley, pp. 172-202, in an excellent discussion on the symbolic meanings in Bleak House, argues that the characters who are in some way fixated on Chancery, reveal humanity's capacity for self-destruction through its inability to see that 'life is now ... and not in some imaginary future or condition still unrealized' (p. 199).

Esther first meet her, Richard declares her mad on the evidence of her smiling and curtseying manner and her peremptory conversation. These mannerisms and her disconnected conversation are sustained through the novel to show her disordered mind. First reactions to such mannerisms vary according to the nature of the person encountered. Ada and Caddy are frightened, Richard thoughtless, Esther inclined to humour her, and George apprehensive. This attitude changes to pity and affection in those who get to know her better, notably Richard, Caddy, Esther and Allan Woodcourt, to all of whom she shows kindness and a willingness to help. At one point, Dickens emphasises Miss Flite's essential humanity in contrast to that of the more rational world: 'She uses some odd expressions, but is as cordial and full of heart as sanity itself can be - more so than it often is' (ch. 47).

In the world of Bleak House Miss Flite also represents sincerity, not pretending to be anything other than what she is. It is this quality that Esther recognises in contrast to the proceedings in Chancery: 'I sat where Richard put me, and tried to listen, and looked about me; but there seemed to be no reality in the whole scene, except poor little Miss Flite, the madwoman, standing on a bench, and nodding at it' (ch. 24). By this contrast, Dickens stresses the unreality of the legal system and thus enhances his indictment of it. Not only does it have the capacity to drive people mad, it is insane itself. By implication the madness of Miss Flite is preferable because it is at once more 'real' and more humane. The simple eighteenth-century correlation between insanity and unreason here has disappeared altogether. Indeed, it is Miss Flite who thoroughly understands the legal system and reasons on the logical connections between suits and suitors -

hence her warnings about Richard's impending fate. Her perceptions and linking of ideas often give a vision of the true situation more accurately and vividly than does systematic analysis. This is also related to the idea that mad people can see intuitively a relation between things that is denied to sane people. Sometimes, of course, the ability to see a relation that does not exist, except in the mind of the mad person, is precisely why that person is deemed mad. Thus, while Miss Flite can at times show shrewdness and penetration, her outburst on the conferring of titles in England leads Esther to the conclusion that 'I'm afraid she believed what she said; for there were moments when she was very mad indeed' (ch. 35).

Not that Miss Flite is developed into a fully rounded character; her place and function in the novel preclude any lengthy exposition. But neither is she treated merely as a comic stock figure. She is indeed comical when she talks about the court and its proceedings, but the fact of her being a victim of the court is seen as serious, and modifies the comic viewpoint. Those who know her well (unlike the lawyers in Chancery, who see her as an object of the court rather than as a person) do not laugh at her, and her function in the novel is a serious one.

Ultimately, madness is shown as a possible consequence of involvement in the world of Bleak House, and it is one of the means whereby Dickens presses home his attack on Chancery in particular and inept institutions in general. It is not the only possible consequence, or the most preferable - there is no suggestion that individual madness can be seen as a feasible means of escape from a world which has itself gone mad. The message is not as pessimistic as that. Dickens moves close to this suggestion when he shows madness

to be at the core of a legal system which was supposed to uphold justice and order, the cornerstones of a stable society. But he then side-steps the implication with the view that it is best to avoid dealing with the legal system at all; hardly a satisfactory solution. Those who succeed best in society are those who, while accepting the limitations of their situation, improve it through their own industriousness, quiet charity, strength of character, and balanced outlook: notably Esther, Allan Woodcourt, Caddy Jellyby and Rouncewell. In so doing they avoid the withdrawal of John Jarndyce, the stagnation of the Dedlocks and their followers, the absurdity of Mrs Jellyby and Mrs Pardiggle, the madness of Richard Carstone and Miss Flite, and the near-madness of Gridley.

Insanity, then, was seen as a limitation. It dissipated the individual's inherent talents and it restricted his ability to function as an effective member of the community. Being akin to imprisonment, it became a powerful component in Dickens's attack on those aspects of Victorian society that he believed inhibited or warped individual development. One of the most obvious of these aspects was the prison system. The debilitating effects of physical imprisonment are a recurrent motif in Dickens's work. As I noted in Chapter III, Fagin and Rudge are both shown in prisons, and their mental anguish is part of the retribution for their earlier crimes. With them, there is also the added effect on their consciousness of the fact that they are facing imminent execution. John Jasper, if Forster is to be believed, was to end his days in the condemned cell, relating his crimes as if they had been done by another person.[1]

1. Forster, Life of Dickens, vol. 2, p. 452.

Here, however, I am chiefly concerned with Mr Dorrit and Dr Manette, both of whom undergo imprisonment but are not guilty of any serious crime. Dorrit is used to show the futility of the Debtors' prison - a prison about which Dickens felt particularly strongly because of his own childhood experiences, as every biographer has emphasized. Dickens viewed such prisons as quite distinct from criminal prisons, for in the same book we see Rigaud in jail without any suggestion he should not be there. And in A Tale of Two Cities Dr Manette is completely innocent: the indignation there stems from the oppressive rights of the French nobles and imprisonment without trial, rather than from the existence of the Bastille as a repository for criminals.

As a result of Dorrit's and Manette's innocence, their madness is of a different type from the hallucinatory madness of prisoners awaiting sentence for crimes they did in fact commit. That madness was allied to, and had its foundations in, the moral retributive madness of melodrama. But the innocence of these men allows a different thematic approach to imprisonment. Dorrit's and Manette's sufferings are not justified in moral terms but become means of criticising the prison system itself and the society of which that system is a part. The evils of prisons rather than those of the individuals in them became more emphasized. This shift of emphasis enabled Dickens to use the prison as an emblem for a society which, in its rigidity, alienated individuals and made personal interaction between them difficult. Indictment of the prison system therefore became emblematic of an indictment of society generally.

Dickens's concern with the effects of imprisonment led Jack Lindsay to see it as a reflection of Dickens's own personal experience in particular, and of the phobia of the Victorians concerning their

origins in general. Dorrit and Manette are each imprisoned for a score of years. Both are released by forces outside their control, and continue to be tormented by their prison experiences. Dorrit, haunted by the fear of social exposure, embodies Dickens's own fear of the past being exposed as well as the conscience of a society that dares not contemplate its origins. With Manette, the experience of oppressed misery has not merely twisted him as it twisted Dorrit, but has broken down the whole system of memory. Only the intrusion of events from the revolution brings him back to full consciousness, and he finds that the bitterness engendered by his sufferings as a wronged man has put him inside a larger sphere of social action and reaction.[1]

Lindsay's view implies a consistent and discernible approach to the prison experience in the novels. This is not the case. Instead, there exists much ambiguity about the relationship between prison and the 'real world', about what reality is, about what is the best attitude to adopt to the experience of prison, and about the extent to which the prisoners themselves are responsible for their own mental delusions.

Dorrit is a more complex and ambiguous character than Dr Manette, who, being more clearly a symbol, is less individualized. On his entry into the Marshalsea, Dorrit was 'a very amiable and very helpless middle-aged gentleman, who was going out directly. Necessarily he was going out again directly, because the Marshalsea lock never turned upon a debtor who was not.[2] The trauma of his situation creates a nervousness evident in his mannerisms and hesitant speech. Six months imprisonment is, however, sufficient for him

1. Lindsay, Charles Dickens, p. 361.
2. Charles Dickens, Little Dorrit, ed. John Holloway (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), I.6.

to acquire the habits of a regular inmate:

> Crushed at first by his imprisonment, he had soon found a dull relief in it. .... If he had been a man with strength of purpose to face these troubles and fight them, he might have broken the net that held him, or broken his heart; but being what he was, he languidly slipped into this smooth descent and nevermore took one step upward. [I. 6]

While showing how easy it is to slip into such apathy, Dickens does not condone or excuse it by showing it as an inevitable response to life in prison. Much of Dorrit's reaction is clearly the result of his own character and the attitude he adopts is not the only possible one. Other characters were not led to such self-pity and delusion. Plornish, for instance, while not understanding why there are ups and downs in the world, knows that they occur, but refuses to accept defeat when experiencing one of the 'downs'.

The usually cited example of a character unaffected by the prison is Amy. But in actual fact Amy's whole approach to life is influenced by her experience of prison. In Venice, Mr Dorrit exhorts his daughter to form a surface and reproaches her for continually reminding him of the past. While it is wrong of him to forget the time when he depended on his daughter for everything, there is also something wrong in the way Little Dorrit tries to keep the relationship in its old form.[1] It is almost as though, by her very presence, Little Dorrit drives her father further into the world of illusion, then waits for him to break down.[2] This, of course, was not Dickens's intention, but his presentation creates that effect nevertheless. Edmund Bergler analyzes the way in which Amy's character and attitudes are distorted and finds that beneath the goodness, sacrifice, devotion and meekness, Dickens is actually describing a real type, the 'nice masochist'. In support of his

1. N.M. Lary, Dostoevsky and Dickens (London: Routledge, 1973), p. 101.
2. Lary, p. 103.

contention, Bergler quotes four instances that reveal characteristics of this type. He educes readiness to take the blame, dreams of misery, that refute the favourable external situation, weak pseudo-aggressive attempts at negating superego's accusations of exactly this masochistic pleasure (for example, the excuse of not wanting to 'disgrace father' given as a reason for her behaviour), the refusal to accept the high financial position to which her family is elevated, and her self-depreciation in appearing before Clennam in the shabby dress which she had always worn in the bad old times and which she has deliberately kept.[1]

Dorrit's own sufferings are primarily the result of his own pretensions and his delusions about himself. He soon slips into a pretence of gentility, manifest in his refusal to acknowledge that his children work for him, his cadging from the inmates and others such 'testimonials' as he considers are due to 'the Father of the Marshalsea', and the air of condescension with which he greets new prisoners. All these ploys are means of removing himself from the squalid reality of his situation. As a satire on society in general, all this is very good, but as an exposition of Dorrit's character it has the effect of removing the reader's sympathy from him, as also does the complacency with which he, Fanny and Edward accept Amy's sacrifices. The mock gentility and the outbursts of maudlin self-pity make us wonder just how much of Dorrit's character is due to innate selfishness rather than to his misfortune.

The extent of Dorrit's self-delusion is indeed remarkable. That other characters participate in it as well is extraordinary.

1. Edmund Bergler, 'Little Dorrit and Dickens' Intuitive Knowledge of Psychic Masochism', American Imago, 14 (1957), pp. 380-85. The controversial nature of the extent and effect of the prison on Little Dorrit and the attitude of critics to it is also discussed by Graham Mott, 'Was there a stain upon Little Dorrit?', The Dickensian, 87 (1980), pp. 31-36.

The prisoners, on the whole, accept Dorrit at his own valuation. Worse still, his family contribute to it by allowing him to pretend they do not work. Amy actually hides the truth from him in the belief that he can therefore still retain his pride. She does not question whether it would be better to forget pride in the interests of truth. Throughout the novel, Dickens certainly questions it, but when he considers how to deal with it, moral uncertainty enters the picture. Little Dorrit's advice to Clennam on how to deal with her father's cadging is one example: 'Don't encourage him to ask ...'. To ignore Mr Dorrit's hints is no way of stopping them, as he will only resort to even more obvious and degrading ploys. Yet Clennam, who should know better, respects the appeal.[1] Again, Little Dorrit's assurances to Clennam that her father had grown different in some things since he was in prison and that he was not always as he is when Clennam sees him, cannot be accepted uncritically, for it is clear that she too accepts her father on his own evaluation, even to the extent of being proud that he is respected and courted 'far more than the Marshall is' (I.10).

It is also uncertain what exactly is meant when Little Dorrit speaks of what her father 'really' is: the man who found it easy to be respectable in the time of prosperity; a man with human needs and feelings who, had he not been corrupted by his experiences of prison, might have been a benevolent father; the prisoner who depends totally on her for whatever position he has.

> Her confusion would not be disturbing - Little Dorrit is, after all, a girl loyally defending her parent - if Dickens himself did not partake of it. It seems that although he aims for the second of these views ... he in fact tends toward the view that Dorrit should be kept a helpless prisoner.[2]

That Dorrit's delusion has almost reached a pathological stage

1. Lary, p. 100.
2. Lary, pp. 96-97.

is confirmed by the attitude he adopts to such characters as his brother and Old Nandy. He entertains doubts about their physical health and mental faculties, doubts which are, in fact, more appropriate to himself. Despite the depth of this delusion, its basis is extremely fragile, and there are moments when awareness threatens to break it. Such an occasion occurs when he tries to encourage Amy to 'lead on' young Chivery in order to maintain the recognition of Chivery's father, the turnkey, upon whose actions much of Dorrit's material comfort and status depends. During his argument a sense of the enormity of his request surfaces, and his voice dies away to be replaced by defiance of and pity for his own situation:

> Thus, now boasting, now despairing, in either fit a captive with the jail-rot upon him, and the impurity of his prison worn into the grain of his soul, he revealed his degenerate state to his affectionate child. [I.19]

Despite Dickens's assertion that the jail-rot is the cause of all this, the prison has been the occasion, rather than the cause, of Dorrit's delusion. It may well have contributed to that delusion, but, on Dickens's own presentation, much is due to Dorrit's own selfishness and this alienates the reader's sympathy. Instead of pity for his situation we feel that with a greater mental effort and less self-deception and self-centredness Dorrit could face reality squarely and perhaps overcome the degrading effects of his prison experience. There is no firm sense that Dorrit's delusions are a direct consequence of the prison experience, any more than Mrs Merdle's affectation is a necessary consequence of contact with society.

The extent to which individual attitudes can be responsible for a psychotic condition is concisely explored in the inset story of Miss Wade (II.21). That she herself is largely responsible

for her condition is evident in Dickens's choice of title: 'The History of a Self-Tormenter'. Miss Wade is both witty and intelligent on the occasions in the novel when she makes an appearance. But these characteristics have only helped her to rationalize her own perverted feelings and interpose an effective mental barrier between herself and all with whom she comes in contact. By combining her intelligence with a thwarted need for love, and thus perverting such offers of love as she receives, she builds her own prison.[1] In fact, she adopts 'the classic manoeuvre of the child who is unloved - she refuses to be lovable, she elects to be hateful'.[2] This produces a definite, if unconscious, desire to be unloved and to provoke disappointments. It can be seen in her choice, early in life, of a coquettish girl whose actions had the capacity to pain her, and in her later demand for absolute approval from Tattycoram - which leads, of course, to absolute rejection. Having adopted such an attitude, Miss Wade sees her life in terms of self-commiseration, and she uses this to justify her bitter approach to everybody else.

In assessing the effects of such an approach to life, Bergler suggests that

> No reader ... can possibly conclude that the rage of envy which Tattycoram feels is not justified in some degree, or that Miss Wade is wholly wrong in pointing out to her the insupportable ambiguity of her position as the daughter-servant of Mr and Mrs Meagles and the sister-servant of Pet Meagles. Nor is it possible to read Miss Wade's account of her life ... without an understanding that amounts to sympathy.[3]

In the case of Tattycoram this is accurate, and Miss Wade is indeed correct in pointing out the ambiguity: it is portrayed as existing:

1. Lucas, p. 269.
2. Bergler, p. 375. Bergler analyzes in detail the clinical aspects of Miss Wade's psychosis as discernible from Dickens's descriptions of her actions, and he testifies to both the subtlety and psychological accuracy of Dickens's portrayal (pp. 375-380).
3. Bergler, p. 375.

irrespective of Miss Wade's view of it. The failure of Tattycoram to understand or accept the reasons for her own rage, and the complacency of the Meagles family toward it, succeed in directing our sympathy toward her. But, significantly, Tattycoram has not rejected the need to be loved, nor has she adopted a completely cynical attitude to life. On the contrary, she fears and mistrusts her own tempers, believing that she is 'mad' when she vents ingratitude to those who mean nothing but good to her (I.2). Her discontent is the result of confusion rather than of a rationalised antagonism to life. That she does not share Miss Wade's deep psychosis and ultimate desire to be unloved is made clear to herself by her experience with Miss Wade.

> I am bad enough, but not so bad as I was, indeed. I have had Miss Wade before me all this time, as if it was my own self grown ripe - turning everything the wrong way, and twisting all good into evil. I have had her before me all this time, finding no pleasure in anything, but keeping me as miserable, suspicious, and tormenting as herself. [II.33]

Tattycoram's desire to return to her original situation shows her belief that there had been some advantages in it. Dickens does not, however, resolve the issue of her rebellion and the Meagles' partial responsibility for it. Mr Meagles may concede that his naming of Tattycoram had been thoughtless (II.33), but this does not involve any acceptance of responsibility. Tattycoram's return is primarily motivated by her realization that Miss Wade represents what she herself will become should she stay with her. To offset her mental sufferings, Mr Meagles counsels the pursuit of goodness and duty with resignation as exemplified in Little Dorrit's approach to the experience of prison. This sidesteps the issue of the extent of injustice (and therefore responsibility) embodied in the Marshalsea in Little Dorrit's case, and in the dependent status of Tattycoram. By making environmental conditions secondary to personal values,

Dickens fails to explore the extent to which those personal values may be affected by social conditioning.

With Miss Wade's story, however, it is clearly stressed tht although her being illegitimate and an orphan helps to explain her original ambiguous situation, the force with which she uses her intelligence to analyze and then wilfully pervert the reality of her situations firmly places the onus of responsibility for her psychosis on herself. Though the reader may wonder at her perversity and understand the progress of it, this does not, I believe, lead to any sympathy for her. In fact she exemplifies Bergler's own observation that 'it is part of the complexity of this novel which deals so bitterly with society that those of its characters who share its social bitterness are by that very fact condemned'.[1]

Miss Wade is an extreme example of an imprisonment, albeit self-imposed, that leads to a distorted outlook on life. That her story was meant to reflect a major theme of the novel is apparent in a letter in which Dickens mentioned his purpose in including it.

> In Miss Wade I had an idea, which I thought a new one, of making the introduced story so fit into surroundings impossible of separation from the main story, as to make the blood of the book circulate through both.[2]

Forster, to whom this letter was addressed, did not believe Dickens's idea was successful, and he found Miss Wade's story the 'least interesting part of Little Dorrit'. Modern critics have not agreed with Forster, for while it is true that there is a lack of credibility in Miss Wade's ever presenting a written justification of herself (and, least of all to Arthur Clennam),[3] the contents of that letter,

1. Bergler, p. 374.
2. Letter of Dickens to Forster, as quoted by Forster, Vol. 2, p. 227.

besides being a self-contained account of her life, are also an extension of the major concerns of the novel.

As a thematic element, Miss Wade's story reveals the degree to which personal delusion was the result of individual perversity acting upon adverse circumstances which, while not the cause of that perversity, can be viewed as a contributory factor. I would stress, however, that for Dickens these circumstances were a minor and incidental factor. In this context, it is significant that he entitles the story the history of a self-tormentor and not the history of a victim.

Miss Wade's story, then, reflects a theme which Dickens developed more fully in his portrayal of Mr Dorrit. Dorrit's own responsibility for his situation is made more clear after he is released. Release from prison is not a solution: the fortune which has miraculously devolved upon him enables him to realize his deepest fantasy already nurtured in the Marshalsea.[1] But now he also fears that someone may recognise him from his prison days. The delusions that he had encouraged in the Marshalsea as a form of protection remain with him, and Amy's belief that she would see him as she had never yet seen him, with the 'dark cloud cleared away', and as her mother saw him long ago, is not to be fulfilled, or at least not as Amy expected it to be.

Wanting to start life anew, Dorrit regarded the past as 'a painful topic, a series of events which I wish - ha - altogether to obliterate' (II.5). While this desire to renew life is admirable, the means used are dangerous since references that could be construed as relating to the prison were bound to occur, particularly to

3. A point made by Bergler, p. 380.
1. R.R. Roopnaraine, 'Time and the Circle in Little Dorrit', Dickens Studies Newsletter, 3 (1972), p. 72.

a person so self-centred. His self-imposed facade was liable to destruction at any moment. Dorrit has merely given himself a new set of anxieties and pressures, and he still continues to live a life of pretence.

His refusal to accept the reality of the past and present places him in constant danger of mental collapse. His evasive reaction to the discussion by the monk of the solitary life at St Bernard (II.1); his affront at Martigny when he believes that the Innkeeper, by allowing Mrs Merdle to use the apartments reserved for him, had purposefully made a distinction between himself and other gentlemen of fortune (II.3); and his paranoaic fear that his valet may discover his past; are all indicative of the fragility of his attempt to suppress the past. The issue becomes centralised in the scene between Amy and her father in which he reproaches her for carrying the atmosphere of the prison about her, rather than shedding it and plunging into society like Fanny (II.5). What Mr Dorrit sees as a personal affront is really a difference in character between Amy and Fanny. Dorrit, failing to see this, easily slips into his role of injured parent, and in this grotesque playing-out of another of her father's fantasies Amy is cast as the ungrateful, unfeeling daughter.[1] Frederick Dorrit defends her by reference to her behaviour in prison and by challenging his brother and Fanny with the question 'Have you no memory?' Memory is precisely what Dorrit is at pains to eradicate. The past has been relegated to the unconscious. That he would prefer to remove it altogether is made clear by his ban on all reference to the prison.

By his actions, Dorrit moves from 'illusion to deepening illusion

1. A point noted by Roopnaraine, p. 73.

and builds away at the castle which is the stuff of his fancy'.[1] Critical judgement of Dorrit's acting out his delusions is hampered and complicated by Dickens's own attitudes. As the book progresses, Dickens's direct comments on Dorrit's action increase and they serve as a constant reminder of Dorrit's time in prison. It is as if Dickens himself cannot conceive of Dorrit other than in terms of his imprisonment. For example, when Dorrit asserts that he would not wish to stand in Little Dorrit's way and that she ought to marry rather than stay at home looking after him, he is actually talking quite reasonably, even though his motives may not be above suspicion. Dickens, however, intervenes with the direct comment: 'O what a time of day at which to begin that profession of self denial ... ', thereby denying that any change in behaviour is admissible in Dorrit. Dickens also inserts references to the prison into the narrative structure. While such references are successful in retaining the prison as a central symbol, they also focus attention on the Marshalsea as the central reality for Dorrit, a point of view that is hardly satisfactory. Thus, while Dorrit may wish to forget his experiences in prison, the reader is never allowed to.

Dorrit's attempt to block out the past becomes increasingly difficult for him. The well-intentioned visits of Flora and young Chivery bring with them reminiscenses of the past, and even Dorrit himself begins to feel ashamed of his treatment of John. Significantly, he wonders whether he ought to pass the Marshalsea gate or not (II.7, 18). Not only is the past beginning to impinge on the present, but it begins to exert a positive attraction.

1. Roopnaraine, p. 72. On the clinical symptoms of delusions, particularly those of grandeur and persecution, see L.C. Kolb, Modern Clinical Psychiatry, 8th ed. (1934; Philadelphia: Saunders, 1973), pp. 106-07; and on the querulousness characteristic of some prison psychoses, p. 502.

The final process of breaking down begins when Dorrit returns to Italy and sees Little Dorrit and Frederick in conversation. This releases a visual memory of life in the prison:

> When he looked about him under the strong influence of the old associations he tried to keep it out of her mind, and perhaps out of his own too, by immediately expatiating on the great riches and great company that had encompassed him in his absence .... [II.19]

Memory has become difficult to suppress, and he continues his desperate attempt to avoid reality by projecting his own fears and exhaustion onto his brother. Past associations assert themselves on his consciousness, culminating in his mental collapse at Mrs Merdle's dinner party. The superimposed edifice that he had built up since his release having broken down, only the memory of his former days remains. This memory is a combination of the physical reality of prison and the illusion of gentility he had fostered there, and he dies in the belief that he is back in those times.[1]

R. Rupert Roopnaraine sees the whole scene as the supreme instance in which the irreducible reality of the Marshalsea rises up to assert itself over the ephemeral reality which Dorrit has been trying to construct since his release.[2] The scene does indeed effectively reveal this theme. Whether the thematic equation 'reality equals Marshalsea' is a satisfactory one is another matter. Part of the force of Dorrit's end derives from the fact that he dies without ever having achieved a 'right perception' of his situation. He does not, as John Lucas believes, become more concerned about the wellbeing of others.[3] His desire to send his watch to be pawned

1. Some critics mention Dorrit as suffering a stroke. For example, Monroe Engel, The Maturity of Dickens (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 128. Dickens does not say exactly what Dorrit suffers from but merely indicates a complete mental breakdown accompanied by physical fatigue and exhaustion. Not that the exact nature of the collapse is particularly important, as its value lies in its symbolic function.
2. Roopnaraine, p. 56.

is merely a repetition of his action in the Marshalsea days, and Amy, as usual, is the one who would suffer the degradation of actually going to the pawnbrokers. In fact, he moves from one illusion to another and then back to the original one. His breakdown occurs when one illusion consumes the other, overwhelming the reality of his physical situation, not, as many critics believe, when reality breaks through illusion. Dorrit lives and dies in a world of illusion. By contrast, Clennam, when in prison, begins to experience the effects of jail-rot, but he is saved through becoming aware of the central place that Little Dorrit occupies in his recent life. She becomes Clennam's mentor as she had been her father's, but this time with more success.[1]

This summary account of Dorrit's part in the novel does not do justice to Dickens's subtle portrayal of the man's progress toward mental collapse. Throughout the novel Dorrit's hold on reality has been tenuous at best, and the gradual assertion of his unconscious leads to his final collapse. This has obvious parallels with the rest of the novel - suppress the truth, live by appearance rather than actuality, and the truth will assert itself, often with devastating effects. The physical imprisonment of Dorrit is thus only one stage in his self-imprisonment. Other characters also imprison themselves in various types of illusion. Mrs Clennam hides behind a facade of religious rigour, and Miss Wade behind an embittered outlook on life; while Mrs General imprisons herself beneath a code of 'varnish' that retains the 'proper, placid and pleasant' at the expense of real feeling. Likewise, society, as satirised in Mrs Merdle, kills natural feeling and the readiness

3. Lucas, p. 259.
1. Roopnaraine, p. 55. On illusion and reality as a theme, see also Engel, pp. 126-29.

of society to accept Merdle and his kind, and to elevate them to exalted ranks, shows society blindly imposing on itself. All of this suggests that the prison in which any of us are inured is deep within us.[1]

Ultimately there is much ambiguity in the prison symbols. With those who willingly choose their own physical or mental prison, such as Mrs Clennam and Miss Wade, then obviously a change on their part can alleviate their situation. But where the physical confinement is imposed from without, the 'correct' mental approach to it is not very clear. There is no evidence, except perhaps in Plornish, as to what is the best way to come to terms with the experience of prison. The need to retain one's own values and not delude oneself seems to be the way, but in Dorrit's case this is confusedly bound up with Dickens's idea that the Marshalsea is the inner reality, which clearly it is not, since the prison is shown satirically as a microcosm of a deluded society at large.

Many critics have discussed the different attitudes to reality of Amy and her father, and rightly so since Dickens is at pains to point these out. Deductions from this difference are not, however, straightforward. Amy so far accepts the reality of the prison that their release, actuated as it is by a fairy-tale event, cannot convince her of the reality of their new life.[2] This is where the difficulty lies. For, if life outside the prison is 'unreal', then the Marshalsea becomes the basic reality of the book, and indeed it is the one reality firmly rooted in a realistic presentation. By extension of the metaphor, society itself is also a prison. The emphasis therefore is not whether one is in prison or not,

1. Roopnaraine, p. 56, makes this point when discussing the symbolism of Dorrit's final collapse.
2. Angus Easson, 'Marshalsea Prisoners', Dickens Studies Annual, 3 (1972), p. 82.

but on how one accepts that condition and adjusts one's life accordingly. Those who adjust to a false or meaningless standard either live an empty existence like Mrs Merdle or suffer mental breakdown like Mr Dorrit. Such a breakdown also signals the failure of deception.[1] But Dickens remains uncertain about what exactly is reality for Dorrit, and hence the ambiguity surrounding both his breakdown and the cause of it. Those who try to escape the imposed limits do so only by descending into trivia as Flora does, into senile dementia like Mr F's Aunt, or into arrested growth like Maggie.

One possible development from Dickens's presentation would be that in a world where much is restricted and where society's general values are irrational, personal retreat into madness or delusion as a means of survival and escape is a reasonable response. But Dickens does not accept this, and therefore portrays Dorrit's failure to do so. Instead, Dickens reaffirms the Victorian ideal that, despite environmental experiences and difficulties, quiet perseverance, industriousness and sincerity will bring their own rewards, even if they are only muted ones. Hence the ending allotted to Little Dorrit and Clennam.

Dickens returns to the subject of physical confinement and its effects on mental outlook in A Tale of Two Cities. Here again, by showing insanity as one of the consequences of imprisonment he can vividly illustrate the injustice of that imprisonment. Indirectly, this adds justification to the revolutionaries in their initial storming of the Bastille. But as revolutionary behavior becomes excessive and misdirected, Dickens moves sympathy to the

1. Easson, pp. 83-84.

victims of it, and again he strengthens his contention by stressing the threat that this violence poses to Manette's sanity. Madness is not only a means of directing the plot and theme of the novel; Dickens strives to deepen the understanding of Manette's character by describing his mental state in terms other than conventional ones. Manette's madness is relevant to his individual situation in the novel. Being confined in a solitary cell Manette has no contact with other prisoners and is spared the necessity of adopting an attitude to them. He is aware nonetheless that solitary confinement may itself lead to madness, and he knows from warnings he has noted in himself that his reason may not long remain unimpaired (II.10). This is why he has sought to record his story before that happens.

In an attempt to avoid loss of reason he begged to make shoes. His shoemaking is superficially pictured as a symptom of mental regression, but in its inception it was essentially a rebellion against madness - what we would nowadays call vocational therapy. It was the only contact with reality that his distracted mind, otherwise cut off from reality, possessed.[1] But long dependence on shoemaking as the only dependable reality in prison makes it, at first, the only reality out of prison. To preserve this illusion the Defarges continue to lock his door, believing he would be frightened if the door were left open (I.6). Gradually he is able to adjust to his new freedom, but even then he retains his shoemaker's bench for security against future mental collapse:

> He once yearned so frightfully for that occupation, and it was so welcome when it came; no doubt it relieved his pain so much, by substituting the perplexity of the fingers for the perplexity of the brain, and by substituting, as he became

1. L.F. Manheim, 'A Tale of Two Characters', Dickens Studies Annual, 1 (1970), p. 235. Throughout the discussion of A Tale of Two Cities I am indebted to this article.

> more practised, the ingenuity of the hands for the ingenuity of mental torture; that he has never been able to bear the thought of putting it quite out of reach. [II.19]

The debilitating effects of prison are also emphasized by Manette's prematurely aged appearance, his faintness of voice from long disuse, his tendency to slip into vacancy, his inability to recall even an ongoing converstion, and his complete loss of identity except as Number 105, North Tower (I.6). All this points to clinical depression. The effort to remove memory of a better time, since such a memory would have been unendurable in prison, has left him with periods of amnesia. Dickens shows skill in handling the idea of conscious and repressed memory. Manette's amnesia is reciprocal: during the period of relapse he cannot recall his normal life, or vice versa.[1] Unlike the superimposed mental escape that Dorrit had sought, Manette's later blacking-out of reference to his imprisonment is a mental defence mechanism. His avoidance of the past includes the time just prior to his imprisonment. Miss Pross sums up this mental process quite succinctly:

> It's a dreadful remembrance. Besides that, his loss of himself grew out of it. Not knowing how he lost himself, or how he recovered himself, he may never feel certain of not losing himself again. That alone wouldn't make the subject pleasant, I should think. [II.6]

In this way the mental effects of imprisonment are shown as extending far beyond the time of actual internment. Manette himself is aware of the effects and both fears and suspects the possibility

1. Manheim, 'A Tale of Two Characters', p. 235. On clinical depression, see Kolb, pp. 110-11, and on amnesia, pp. 119-20. Manette suffers both retrograde and antegrade amnesia. Dickens does not himself use clinical terminology, but his concern for the veracity of his portrayal of Manette is indicated in his response to a suggestion by Wilkie Collins: 'The peculiarity of the Doctor's character, as affected by his imprisonment ... would ... render it out of the question to put the reader inside of him before the proper time, in respect of matters that were dim to himself through being, in a diseased way, morbidly shunned by him'. Letter to Collins, 6 October 1859; repr. Dickens: The Critical Heritage, p. 423.

of a relapse (II.19). At times, when some vivid recollection takes place, the revived memory is painful. Usually such recollections are overcome, as in the flash of recognition of Darnay at his trial in England or the reference made to hidden papers in the Tower of London. But when the shock is more severe, and emphasizes Mannette's own wrong, he returns to shoemaking. This he does after Charles's proposal to Lucy, and for a longer time following that marriage and Charles's revelation of his long-suspected identity. On his daughter's marriage, Manette subdues his own fears. He is only too aware that someone can become warped by contact with the wrongs of another, and he feels that Lucy's life should not be wasted and 'struck aside from the natural order of things' for his sake (II.17). He is also a skilful analyst of his own condition. He can speak about it to Lorry

> with the diffidence of a man who knew how slight a thing would overset the delicate organisation of the mind, and yet with the confidence of a man who had slowly won his assurance out of personal endurance and distress. [II.19]

Although in periods of relapse he retreats into shoemaking, he does not use it as a means of dwelling on his problem. But Lorry wonders whether retention of the shoemaker's bench involved retention of the idea of being wronged and therefore hinders rather than helps recovery. Accordingly, he coerces the doctor into agreeing to its removal. The doctor agrees in the belief that there could be no more 'violent sounding of that string again' and that the circumstances likely to renew it are exhausted (II.19). This is not to be the case, as the subsequent events of the novel show. When Manette discovers that he has been the unwilling destroyer of Darnay (and thereby of his daughter's happiness) and is unable to rectify this, he calls again for his bench and tools and frets over their absence. He is last seen leaving Paris as a 'helpless,

inarticulate, murmuring old man' (III.13). For this reason, Manheim sees the destruction of the bench as an error and Manette as 'a pitiful picture of mental decay from which we can see no hope of recovery despite the optimistic vision of Carton's last moments'.[1] But in this judgement, Manheim makes insufficient allowance for the effect of Carton's sacrifice on both the immediate and symbolic levels. On the symbolic level, Carton's sacrifice, by a process of projection onto a double, atones for the original cause of Manette's suffering. In terms of the plot it has the immediate effect of allowing Darnay to live, so that the secondary cause of Manette's mental retreat, his responsibility for that death, is removed. Manette can now truly believe that there would be no more sudden shocks that could stimulate a further relapse.

In his affirmation of Dr Manette's recovery, Dickens seems to view the mental breakdown caused by prison as only temporary, and therefore capable of ultimate correction. While it is necessary for Manette to face the past and revive memories that had been conveniently shelved, thereby undergoing relapses, such relapses finally lead to complete restoration of health. But this restoration is only possible with a 'correct' approach to past experience; and the convenient removal of guilt concerning the traumas of the recent past. This removal of guilt is fortuitous. The religious symbolism that accompanies Carton's self-sacrifice and death suggests the comforting belief that salvation (physical and mental) is possible through the benevolent actions of God. This assertion of Christian values, with its prophetic announcement of a new and ordered society, provides an ideological explanation for the action of the plot.

1. Manheim, 'A Tale of Two Characters', p. 235. Carton sees a vision of the doctor as 'aged and bent, but otherwise restored and faithful to all men in his healing office, and at peace' (III.15).

It is not a sustained belief providing psychological impetus to the various characters. That impetus stems from their own personal attributes. The extent of mental suffering caused by the prison experience, for example, and the ability to be rehabilitated from it, is seen as a consequence of the individual's reaction to the experience, rather than as an inevitable result of it. The prison does create mental turmoil, but individual personalities are responsible for the extent of that turmoil. Thus A Tale of Two Cities repeats the ambiguity already seen in Little Dorrit as to how far the nature of prison can be blamed for the madness engendered in it.

Despite this ambiguity, Dickens's achievement is strengthened by the contrast with conventional use of madness that occurs in the same novel. Madame Defarge's sister is reduced to hysterical madness partly because of the loss of her virtues and partly because of the deaths of her husband, father and brother (III.10). There is no subtlety in the portrayal: her shrieks and repetition of the numbers up to twelve (the hour at which her husband died) are obvious indicators of the cause of her madness. It primarily serves to explain Madame Defarge's obsessive desire for vengeange on the D'Evremonde family in particular and the nobility in general. It also provides the reason for Dr Manette's internment in the Bastille, where, by the writing of his story, he ironically becomes the denouncer of his son-in-law. Thematically, of course, that document reveals how one's actions can cause effects beyond the immediately obvious - hence the title of the chapter, 'The Substance of the Shadow'.

This juxtaposition of conventional and non-conventional madness within the same novel demonstrates the persistence of traditional

attitudes, despite knowledge of more advanced thinking. It reveals the complexity of Victorian thinking whereby progressive ideas co-existed with conventional ones.

Outside the realm of literal imprisonment are characters who wilfully choose a restricted physical environment that fosters a distorted outlook on life. In so far as they have an element of choice, they can be regarded as responsible for their own mental suffering. In Dickens, the most extended portrayals of this type are Mrs Clennam in Little Dorrit and Miss Havisham in Great Expectations. Much of the horror derived from their presentation lies in the way in which both systematically and ruthlessly set out to exact revenge from a world which they believe has treated them unjustly. In pursuit of this purpose, they deny all other claims of life.

Neither of these characters is treated as certifiably mad, but nor can they be regarded as mentally healthy. Both have chosen to make the wrong done to them the central feature of their lives. Miss Havisham, for example, attempts to stop time at the moment she received the news that her bridegroom to be had deceived and deserted her. She does not try to stop time at the moment before she heard the news, a time when she was living in an illusory world of innocence, security and, as she thought, reciprocated love. She wants, instead, to crystallize her grief into an eternal moment of shock and sorrow.[1] Dickens does not suggest that the shock of betrayal was so great that it caused Miss Havisham to become so deranged that she could no longer help herself and was not therefore responsible for her later actions. The point is rather that such a shock, while devastating, could be overcome by the adoption

1. Hillis Miller, pp. 255-56.

of a rational perspective to it. In fact, he shows her as initially having no greater intention than to save Estella from misery such as she herself had undergone, but gradually letting this innocent aim be replaced by the desire to make Estella the means by which she could wreak vengeance on the male sex (ch. 49).

Both Mrs Clennam and Miss Havisham, to facilitate concentration on their wrongs, opt to live in secluded environments which, being impervious to outside influences, accelerate the progress of their obsessions. The unhealthy nature of such seclusion, with its capacity to warp personality, is made explicitly clear in both novels. Mrs Clennam, shut up in her room, knows nothing of summer and winter, believing that the Lord had been pleased to put her beyond all that. Her being beyond the reach of the seasons 'seemed but a fit sequence to her being beyond the reach of all changing emotions' (I.3). Several times in Great Expectations, Miss Havisham's seclusion from the sun, the hours, days and seasons, is stressed (chs. 6, 8, 11, 17, 38), and Pip sees the connection between her warped outlook and her seclusion when he affirms that

> in shutting out the light of day, she had shut out infinitely more; that, in seclusion, she had secluded herself from a thousand natural and healing influences; that, her mind, brooding solitary, had grown diseased, as all minds do and must and will that reverse the appointed order of their Maker .... [ch. 49]

In both these novels, the morbidity that surrounds their respective environments is symbolic of their mental state and is at the same time a comment upon it.[1] While the general darkness and progressive decay symbolizes the increasing decay in their own minds, the very fact of decay and disintegration defies their

1. On the debt to Gothic conventions of the description of Mrs Clennam's house, the secrets it contains and the heavy atmosphere of mortality, guilt and threat that surrounds it, see David Jarret, 'The Fall of the House of Clennam: Gothic Conventions in Little Dorrit', The Dickensian, 73 (1977), pp. 155-61.

respective attempts to make time stand still at the moment when they were wronged. Likewise, their attempts to escape change and emotion were also doomed to failure. Progress outside their own environments forces changes on them which lead to changes of emotion. Both come to regret their actions, but both are unable to undo the warping of others that resulted from it.

In many ways Mrs Clennam is the less capable of change since she has justified her actions as being sanctioned by religious scripture. She is a study in religious mania as much as in personal obsession. By basing her religion on the principles of the Old Testament she justifies her actions toward her husband, Arthur's mother, Arthur himself, and Little Dorrit who was the beneficiary under the terms of the suppressed codicil. The criminal action involved in the latter she excuses on the basis that the codicil indirectly rewarded sin.

Flintwinch accuses her of hypocrisy in using religion as a justification:

> ... you cheat yourself into making out that you didn't do all this because you were a rigorous woman, all slight and spite and power and unforgiveness, but because you were a servant and a minister and were appointed to do it. [II.30]

But it is obvious that her morbid dwelling on her wrongs and her adherence to the message of the Old Testament have become the motivating force in actual fact - so much so that, while seeking forgiveness from Little Dorrit (an action to which she is forced more by Blandois' threatened blackmail than from any change of conviction) she still asserts that she had been guided by religion to act as she did (II.31). Her dependence on religion, and the fearful mental effects of her use of it, are established early in the novel. From the Bible she reads certain passages

sternly, fixedly, wrathfully - praying that her enemies (she

> made them by her tone and manner expressly hers) might be put to the edge of the sword, consumed by fire, smitten by plagues and leprosy ... and that they might be utterly exterminated.[I.3]

Later we see her regard her seclusion and what amounts to hysterical paralysis as a form of reparation for her 'sins', and the full malignity of her religion becomes apparent in her distortion of her husband's message, 'Do Not Forget', as meaning not to forget the original wrong, rather than not to forget the suppressed codicil. Although she herself had had a repressive upbringing, her early environment is given as an explanation and not as an excuse for her subsequent actions. By emphasizing Mrs Clennam's religious mania to the end of the novel, Dickens shows the destructive effect on mental health of an obsessive and unforgiving religion.[1] Though Little Dorrit advocates guidance by the 'later and better' days embodied in the New Testament, such an approach is beyond Mrs Clennam. The physical collapse of the house in which she had brooded and from which she had enacted her religious principles complements her own reduction to silence by a stroke and permanent paralysis.

Although the presentation of Mrs Clennam's religious mania and its effects has a complementary meaning to other aspects of the novel, it never fully attains the thematic centrality it promises to have at the opening. Instead, it is linked mechanically to the Dorrit concerns which supersede it in the central narrative and upon which the major burden of the prison imagery and the reality versus illusion theme descends. Arthur's dread of his horrible mother is never satisfactorily resolved and Mrs Clennam's role remains ambiguous. It appears as if Dickens had changed his mind about what the real subject of the novel was to be. Initially

1. One of the more pernicious effects of Mrs Clennam's religious severity is the way in which Arthur, through her upbringing, has been emotionally and socially warped. On the failure of Dickens to explore this aspect fully, see Thurley, pp. 230-44.

it seems to be about Clennam's guilt and the opening chapters deepen toward a tragic theme, but at the point when some development seems about to take place, Dickens drops the theme entirely, and follows another story.[1]

However, both the story of the Dorrits and that of the Clennam household do reflect the theme of the alienation of the individual from society, a theme in which the prison motif is only the most potent component. This general alienation is enacted in the extent to which most of the characters wilfully assert myths and fictions about themselves, about their social positions, or about the nature of social reality itself, in order to bring justification, meaning or consolation to their lives. Dickens points out that people who are alienated from their environment need illusion (sometimes harmless, sometimes damaging) to live by, and that this use of reassuring myths is itself a form of voluntary imprisonment.[2] But the initial importance given to the more specific theme of Arthur's guilt and Mrs Clennam's responsibility for it does seem to be sacrificed in the interests of the more general theme.

With Miss Havisham in Great Expectations, Dickens is more successful in making the effects on others of a mentally warped but strong female character part of a central theme, and in the changing relationships between Pip, Estella and Miss Havisham he explores the implications of this theme.

At the outset, the character of Miss Havisham is much more bizarre than that of Mrs Clennam, largely because of the element of the grotesque in her presentation. This allies her more closely

1. Thurley, pp. 235-36.
2. This point was made by J.M. Brown, p. 88, who sees no conflict between the two stories. Brown, pp. 105-14, also has some useful remarks on the effect of environmental pressures on individuals and their struggle for liberation from it as presented in this novel.

to primitive, mythical figures which have the power to overwhelm and horrify the spectator.[1] Miss Havisham does not seek to elevate her situation by investing it with religious sanctions as Mrs Clennam had done, nor indeed to justify it at all other than as a personal desire for revenge. This she achieves in two ways. In the first instance she creates a visual reminder of herself as victim. In so doing she reverses the natural order of things, thereby challenging conventional associations and expectations. The unexpected fusion of the natural with the unnatural gives Miss Havisham a grotesque quality. She is presented as a hideous bride-corpse, and, as such, not only incorporates the realms of inanimate and animate, or death and life, but is also a macabre inversion of the life, beauty and freshness normally associated with brides. As Andrea Gilchrist puts it, 'The start of a new life which a wedding usually implies turns to decay and death in Miss Havisham'.[2] The juxtaposition of dissimilar elements creates a nightmare-like atmosphere in the novel. So pervasive is the grotesque that it has the capacity to perpetuate itself by distorting other characters. In such an environment rational self-will and self-help seem powerless.[3]

The second element of Miss Havisham's revenge on society in general, and the male element of it in particular, is her training of Estella, of whose success as an unfeeling instrument of revenge, she first takes a malignant delight in (chs. 12, 15), but later comes to fear as she realizes the full extent of the monster she has created (ch. 38). This realization signals the beginning of

1. Thurley, pp. 297-98. He also compares her to the image of the 'Terrible Mother' as evident in other nineteenth-century literary works.
2. Andrea Gilchrist, 'The Power of the Grotesque in Great Expectations', The Dickensian, 75 (1979), p. 76.
3. Gilchrist, pp. 77-83, deals in detail with the effect of the grotesque on other characters in the novel. See also, Hollington, pp. 216-30.

an awareness of the consequences of her actions, an awareness more fully acknowledged when she sees in Pip's suffering at Estella's hands, a reflection of her own initial suffering (ch. 44). She not only seeks forgiveness from Pip for blighting his life, but she tries to make amends for it, thereby acknowledging not only her own distortion of life but the subsequent distortion of others that resulted from it (ch. 49).

The onus of responsibility on Miss Havisham is reflected in the extent to which Dickens has made her more sane than her antecedents, both literary and real. One such possible antecedent is a 'diapologue' by Mathews and Yates which centred around two figures, a Miss Mildew, a lady in white and a Mrs Bankington Bombasin, a lady in black, both of whom are slightly deranged - one through having lost her first love on her wedding day, forty years before, the other through the belief that she is an heiress of vast wealth. It was presented on 18 April 1831 but withdrawn after the opening night because of public reaction to the repersonation of two characters who in real life were well known to the London public.[1]

That Dickens himself had knowledge, at least, of the originals is evident in his article, 'Where We Stopped Growing', published in 1853, years after they had disappeared from the streets.[2] In this article he recalls their effect on the imagination. While Dickens shows that in their helpless madness they are victims and through their histories ought to command sympathy, he also makes it clear that the excuse of the past makes them no less

1. Martin Meisel, 'Miss Havisham Brought to Book', P.M.L.A. 81, Pt. 1 (1966), pp. 278-85. On other possible antecedents to Miss Havisham, see also Harry Stone, 'Dickens' Woman in White', The Victorian Newsletter, 33 (1968), pp. 5-8, and Susan Shatto, 'Miss Havisham and Mr Mopes the Hermit: Dickens and the Mentally Ill', Dickens Quarterly, 2 (1985), pp. 43-49, 79-84.
2. Charles Dickens, 'Where We Stopped Growing', Household Words, 6 (1853), pp. 361-63.

difficult and no less foolish in the present, when after all they have to be dealt with.[1] There is a further ambivalence in that although victims, the woman in white is seen as a wilful contributor to her own victimization, so much so that Dickens removes sympathy entirely from her, and believes that the wealthy 'Quaker' who wouldn't marry her had had a happy escape.[2]

This ambiguity is continued (though less harshly) in Miss Havisham, who is made weird but sane, and so is made responsible not only for her acts in the present but also for her decision to continue in a grotesque posture as a reminder of her past injury. Showing her as partly to blame for her own affliction has the effect of displacing blame from the past (for which she was not responsible) to the present (for which she is). Fixation on the original injustice has the immediate consequence of creating fresh injustice in her distortion of Estella's personality.

But the extent to which Miss Havisham's behaviour can be held responsible for the distortions of others remains problematical. Clearly she is largely responsible for the subsequent deformity in Estella's character, as Estella herself is only too ready to point out (ch. 38). But in the case of Pip, much of his suffering is the result of his own self-deception, and not all of it is traceable to his experiences at Satis House. Estella herself, almost out of character, warns him not to expect any affection from her, and his belief that Miss Havisham was his benefactress and had designed him for Estella was of his own making. After all, she had paid for his childhood attendance on her and had stated at the time that she considered it to be full payment for any obligation. And her failure to disabuse him of his later mistakes

1. Meisel, p. 282.
2. Dickens, 'Where We Stopped Growing', p. 363.

is only an imputed guilt: she did not actively encourage him in those mistakes. The extent of her guilt can be easily gauged by comparison with Mrs Clennam in the earlier book and Geoffrey Thurley does just this:

> Like Arthur Clennam's mother, of whom she is a direct descendant, she is a constant source of disquiet for the hero. But where Mrs Clennam actively deceived Arthur and so can be held responsible for his guilt feelings, Miss Havisham is the focus of Pip's own least credible emotions and does nothing active to deceive him.[1]

She had openly encouraged him to admire Estella, knowing it to be hopeless, but still, he had persisted in that love, despite Estella's behaviour.

One of the most ingenious elements in this novel is the way in which the characters evoke sympathy despite their grotesqueness. Dickens achieves this by making us aware that there are human responses, feelings and thoughts beneath the facade of grotesque behaviour. Gilchrist believes that these moments of humanity do not alter our essential rejection of the grotesqueness otherwise exhibited by these characters and that much of their humanity arises only as they themselves realize their own grotesqueness.[2] Certainly their humanity does become more evident as they abandon grotesque poses, but that humanity is clearly shown as existing from the outset. To take the case of Miss Havisham: though obviously responsible for much of her morbidity, the very presence of the decayed wedding feast reveals that she had originally been a victim and had originally been capable of love and hope. Much of her dialogue, although extravagant and self-indulgent, does reveal her as still human and capable of human sufferings. This element is further heightened by the presence of her predatory relatives,

1. Thurley, p. 281.
2. Gilchrist, p. 79.

and despite the bizarre arrangements she makes for her own funeral she evokes compassion and sympathy by contrast with her relations.

In Little Dorrit, on the other hand, Mrs Clennam never evokes such sympathy. I am not suggesting that she is more grotesque, but that she is less humanely depicted. Fundamental in Dickens's portrayal of Miss Havisham is the coexistence of human values that evoke sympathy and grotesque qualities that instinctively evoke rejection. This juxtaposition of values

> disturbs the liberal imagination in its awareness of evil. As a figure moving through fields of sympathy and antipathy which govern a reader's response, she incorporates the problem of holding in solution oppositions between suffering and accountability, cause and effect, understanding and action.[1]

The existence of such oppositions conditions the response of horror and terror usually evoked by such mad and near-mad characters, and it indicates a change in approach from that seen in both the remote mythic forbears of such figures and the more recent antecedents in the Gothic novel.

With both Mrs Clennam and Miss Havisham, despite the sympathetic treatment given the latter, the original cause of mental disturbance is offset by their wilful contribution to their own sufferings, which makes them not only responsible for their own condition but largely responsible for the distortion of others which proceeds from it. And to this extent they are made accountable for it in their respective novels.

This view of individual responsibility for social alienation led Dickens into contradictory attitudes. Most startling is the attitude he adopted to the real-life hermit, James Lucas, whom he visited shortly after the completion of Great Expectations. Lucas had gained local notoriety in Hertfordshire since 1849, when,

1. Meisel, pp. 284-85.

after the death of his mother, he became a recluse. He wore only a blanket and skewer, lived in extremely filthy conditions, believed that his brother wanted to poison him, existed solely on bread and wine, and conversed through a barred window to passers-by.[1] Although some nineteenth-century doctors regarded him as suffering 'moral insanity', others believed he was not certifiably mad. Yet, from the available evidence of his life, modern psychiatrists have diagnosed him as a born psychopath who developed paranoid schizophrenia.

Dickens fictionalised his meeting with Lucas in the frame story to 'Tom Tiddler's Ground', the Christmas story in All the Year Round, 12 December 1861. In the story, a certain Mr Traveller journeys to the country to see a hermit called Tom, whom the traveller designates as Mr Mopes. Uninvited and unwanted, he intrudes upon the hermit's home because he wants to see 'it' (the hermit). Particularly insidious are the attitudes Mr Traveller assumes. He is over-bearing, supercilious, abusive, arrogant and complacently self-righteous. He treats the hermit with contempt, as an 'abominable, dirty thing' (something he had decided upon before he had even met Mr Mopes), and goads him with such raillery as 'What is a man in your obscene state of dilapidation but a Nuisance?'.[2] He attacks Mr Mopes as lazy, dirty, indecent and socially irresponsible. Irrespective of whether the opinions expressed by Mr Traveller accurately represent Dickens's views about James Lucas, nowhere in the story are Mr Traveller's opinions condemned.[3] It is difficult

1. On James Lucas see Susan Shatto, Review of Richard Whitmore, Mad Lucas: The Strange Story of Victorian England's Most Famous Hermit, Dickens Quarterly, 2 (1985), pp. 65-68, and her article, 'Miss Havisham and Mr Mopes the Hermit: Dickens and the Mentally Ill', pp. 43-49.
2. Charles Dickens, 'Tom Tiddler's Corner', in Christmas Stories (London: Dent, 1910), ch. 1.
3. The descriptions of Mr Mopes' appearance and habitat so closely

to reconcile the attitude adopted here to the philosophy of human kindness toward the insane that Dickens displays elsewhere in his works.[1]

Not only did Dickens fail to recognise the signs of mental illness in James Lucas, he was also unable to extend to the hermit any compassion. His clinical powers of observation seem to have been suspended.[2] Instead, in the fictionalised account, there is the moral judgement put into the mouth of the Tinker who is disgusted at Lucas's

> choosing to go ragged and naked, and grimy - maskerading, mountebanking, in what is the real hard lot of thousands and thousands. Why, then, I say its a unbearable and nonsensical piece of inconsistency, and I'm disgusted. [ch. 7]

This view seems to be similar to Dickens's own attitude. Throughout the tale, he appears to be incensed that an educated and wealthy man was wilfully evading his responsibilities. Adherence to the middle-class ethic of hard work, perseverance and fulfillment of one's place in society is applauded, so much so that it blinds Dickens's judgement here. He portrays Mr Mopes as a poseur who adopted excessive and unconventional behaviour simply to gain notoriety. Because of his failure to understand Mr Mopes' mental condition, Dickens not only withdraws sympathy from him but also seems unaware that the attitudes and behaviour assigned to

resemble that of James Lucas, and the story was written so soon after Dickens's meeting with Lucas, that it is highly probably that the indignation expressed by Mr Traveller is indicative of Dickens's reaction to Lucas.

1. See especially his journalistic articles and his comments on asylums in American Notes, ch.1 above, pp. 13-14. In those writings he publically advocated compassion in the treatment of the insane.
2. Shatto, 'Miss Havisham and Mr Mopes the Hermit: Dickens and the Mentally Ill', p. 83. One of Dickens's contemporaries, the journalist Edward Copping, visited Lucas after the publication of 'Tom Tiddler's Corner', and although Copping was uncertain whether Lucas was actually mentally ill, he not only gave him the benefit of the doubt but also charity and compassion.

Mr Traveller are morally reprehensible. The unsympathetic attitude displayed toward eccentricity here, is, however, exceptional in Dickens's works. Despite his own conflicting attitudes he is usually at least ambiguous when apportioning blame to eccentric and mad characters for the lives they lead.

What the 'mad' characters in the later novels reveal, then, is the psychological difficulty of coming to terms with Victorian society; the pressures of social institutions; and an awareness, on Dickens's part, of the complexity of the human mind and the existence of degrees of sanity and insanity. While society was seen as being at least partly responsible for the madness within it, the individual's own attitudes and personality were also deemed contributory factors. As madness was used in less conventional ways, closer studies of individual psychotic states began to emerge. Primarily, these gave support to the thematic structures of the novels and strengthened the force of his social attacks. This more serious attitude to the presentation and use of madness is also reflected in the treatment of such eccentric and semi-mad characters as had traditionally been used for comic relief. As we shall see in Chapter V, it modified Dickens's comic approach to them.

CHAPTER V

MADNESS AND COMEDY

Comedy uses the contradictory or absurd in human situations as a means of defining or resolving some conflict. It is not difficult, then, to see why various forms of madness have been used by comic authors to present their ideas about human beings, their social interaction with each other, and the society in which they exist. Such a use of madness requires a light treatment, for basic to the comic approach is also the need to make the audience or reader believe that no matter what the suffering by a particular character there is ultimately no serious threat. For this reason, the more demonic and terrifying aspects of madness are not the province of the comic writer, but instead such forms of madness as existed in eccentrics, simpletons and lovable grotesques become means of expressing the comic viewpoint.

The Victorian novelists used these characters for three further reasons. First they provided comic relief by helping to precipitate absurd situations which counterbalanced or counterpointed the more serious issues of the novels. Secondly, by presenting a simpler, less complicated set of values than those of the more serious characters, and by showing virtues that were simple, a contrast was provided with those in the novel who existed by more worldly values. The authors often made the point that a loss of simplicity has been detrimental to humans in the materialistic and industrial world of the nineteenth century, and that some combination of the two values was needed. Thirdly, such characters were used to question the nature of reality; the difference between reality and illusion; and the role of the 'abnormal' in a normal society. In this third

capacity they move closer to the serious concerns of the novel and were made more thematically relevant than characters used primarily only for comic relief. Such a presentation combined comic antics with human values and emotions that closely responded to or were a result of the environment in which the character was placed. As these characters became less symbolic and more human in presentation and evoked sympathy or empathy from the reader, they lost much of their comic vitality. A comic distance could no longer be easily maintained.

In Dickens's work these purposes revealed themselves in two basic literary manoeuvres - the use of the simpleton figure and the use of the grotesque. Several types of comic simpleton are evident, the more prevalent being those who resemble the fool tradition but are not strictly in it, those who present a loose association of ideas and thus provide comedy by their conversation and disconnected thought processes, and senile and semi-senile characters. The use of the grotesque ranges from the purely comic or horrific to the tragi-comic. The categories mentioned here are not mutually exclusive, characteristics of one type often existing together with those of another, but I shall consider various characters within the section to which their treatment seems most applicable. In all categories, Dickens can be seen progressing from the purely comic to the use of these characters to reflect serious issues.

The comic use of the simpleton is an offshoot of the tradition of the eccentric and cannot always be differentiated from it. This tradition, which derived from an English delight in individualistic character, is allied to the convention of the Idiot

figure. Both were used as means of commenting upon or criticising the existing values of the society around them. The eccentric did so by thoughts and actions which, being peculiar to himself, defied established canons of social behaviour.

In the early works, notably Sketches by Boz and Pickwick Papers, the general effect of the use of comic semi-mad figures is to illustrate the variety to be found in London in the early nineteenth century. Although they provide focal points around which comic incidents occur, each incident is complete in itself, and does not serve to enhance some dominant theme. Where these characters are definitely regarded as simpletons or mad they are easy to identify by their exaggerated speech, action or thought and because they stand outside the main concerns of the novel.

What these eccentrics did provide was light relief from the often melodramatic plots. Thus, Mrs Nickleby's marrow-throwing neighbour is included in Nicholas Nickleby for his value as a side-show and as a temporary interlude in the melodrama and sentiment which surround Nicholas's own story. While comic, it serves no purpose other than to emphasize Mrs Nickleby's capacity for self-deception, a fact already established elsewhere in the novel. It therefore falls into the category of yet another in a series of adventures that befall the Nickleby family. The dress and behaviour of the gentleman are largely those of the conventional idea of what a madman would look like and how he should behave (chs. 37, 41, 49).[1]

1. Hollington, p. 71, sees the gentleman's antics as expressive of a sexual energy that pervades the novel, and his disordered speech as 'full of the London streets in which confusion also reigns'. While it is true that he emanates a vitality, his appearance is conventional, what Hollington himself refers to as a 'relative of the novel's pantaloons', and the incident remains of interest only as a comic interlude and not for any larger issue.

Historically, such eccentric characters were part of the tradition of the picaresque novel with its exploration of the oddities of life - each complete in itself, but with the cumulative effect of questioning the bounds of normality. Not that this was always a principal concern of the novelists: sometimes these characters were included for their own intrinsic interest, and to provide a means for precipitating comic situations. Such a purpose continued with the early Victorian novelists but became less evident as the century progressed. In Dickens's case, although many of his characters are defined by some obsessions, the differences between them which are evident in assumed mannerisms and peculiarities make each of them individual and unique.[1] It is this exaggeration that has led some critics to regard all Dickens's characters as grotesques or caricatures.

Not all these caricatures should be regarded as mad or even eccentric. Here I reject V.S. Pritchett's definition of comic madness. Speaking of Dickens's works he asserted that:

> A large number of the comic characters can be called mad because they live or speak as if they were the only self in the world. They live alone by some private idea. Mrs Gamp lives by the fiction of the approval of her imaginary friend Mrs Harris .... Mr Gradgrind lives by the passionate superstitution that only 'Facts' exist, Mr Dick by his obsession with King Charles' head .... These people are known to us because they are turned inside out. We know at once their inner life and the illusions they live by ... .
>
> In Dickens, the comic characters who belong to what I call the sane tradition are comparatively few .... Mr Pickwick for example ... .[2]

My opposition to Pritchett's view is not based on his contention

1. Dyson, The Inimitable Dickens, p. 137, regards this as an advance on historical precedents. Though there are literary precedents in the Commedy of Humours and in the eighteenth-century idea of ruling passions, Dickens concern is with the irrational qualities of the human mind and in his essential insights he anticipates many clinical findings of modern psychiatry.
2. V.S. Pritchett, 'The Comic World of Dickens', as repr. in The Dickens Critics, ed. Ford and Lane, pp. 313-14.

that many of Dickens's characters live 'alone by a private idea' and act and speak accordingly - clearly they do, but the assertion that this in itself makes them mad allows far too broad a definition for the use of the word 'mad'. Consideration must be given to the degree to which the character's private idea has overwhelmed his life and impaired his ability to respond to the world about him. A marked difference in degree exists between Mr Dick, Mrs Gamp and Mr Gradgrind, and in the last case the difference is so great as to be a difference in kind. Moreover, it is precisely Dickens's point that because individuals do live in solitary worlds (even some of his heroes and heroines do so), they have difficulty forming worthwhile relationships with each other. This forms a basis of his social criticism. To assert, as Pritchett did, that all such characters are mad is to undermine the force of that criticism.

Whether they are regarded as grotesques or not, these characters become less easy to discern as they are brought more within the ambit of everyday life and experience, and associated more closely with the principal concerns of the novels. Their presentation becomes more realistic, and while some of their gestures and speech patterns may be eccentric, they co-exist with the main characters of their novels rather than appear completely alienated from them - even though in some cases, they mentally still are. The lack of any clear differentiation between madmen and 'normal' people is increased by Dickens's proliferation of characters, many of whom have odd traits but cannot be regarded as mad. A by-product of this proliferation is the blurring of the distinction between the normal and the abnormal.

The simpletons who are not in the fool tradition but are allied to it are used largely for the comic situations they help to precipitate. Thus the fat boy (and others) in Pickwick Papers. By the 1850s these characters ceased to be of interest solely for the comedy they provided and became more integrated into the plot, as does Mr Dick in David Copperfield.

Mr Dick displays some of the peculiar physical attributes conventionally associated with the simpleton in literature - large prominent eyes, a vacant manner, general submission (to Betsey Trotwood), a childish delight in simple pleasures and in praise (ch. 13); but his dress, appearance and manner are not as extravagant as were those of Mrs Nickleby's neighbour in Nicholas Nickleby. Many of these traits are evident also in Maggy in Little Dorrit, but with both characters Dickens extends his concept beyond that of the conventional simpleton.[1] Dickens assigns to Mr Dick definite and individual obsessions, namely King Charles's Head and the Writing of his own Memorial, innocent enough obsessions in themselves. From Dickens's presentation of these obsessions it is possible to 'diagnose' Mr Dick as a schizophrenic.[2]

1. On Maggy, see below pp. 198-202. In his description of Mr Dick, Dickens softened his original comments as is evident from looking at the proofs of the novel. Butt and Tillotson, p. 130, believe this may have been to avoid appearing to present 'disgusting images of morbid fancy'. Certainly, the presentation as we have it has none of the terrifying aspects of madness, nor does it rely solely on conventional images of simpletons.
2. For a discussion of Dickens's presentation of Mr Dick and its resemblance to a clinical diagnosis of schizophrenia, see J.M. Keyte and M.L. Robinson, 'Mr Dick the Schizophrenic', The Dickensian, 76 (1980), pp. 37-39. Manheim, 'Dickens' Fools and Madmen', p. 88, also considers Mr Dick's characteristics indicate a classifiable mental illness - schizophrenia with paranoid trends - rather than simply a mental deficiency in the interests of literature. I would stress, however, that it is the result of Dickens's powers of observation rather than concern on his part to present a clinically plausible character, that such a medically accurate picture can be seen, and that concern about Mr Dick as possible medical patient is incidental to his inclusion in the book.

But Mr Dick's main purpose in the novel is to provide light comedy and to exhibit the qualities of naturalness, simplicity and affection which form a contrast to the machinations of the more worldly - a feature Betsey Trotwood stresses as an asset when she defends him against those who would prefer him to have been locked away (ch. 14).[1] Such a defence is not merely against Mr Dick's relatives but also against the prevalent social attitude of which they are representative. Thus a serious note is introduced as to the treatment of simpletons in the nineteenth century, but it is not developed into a major concern. Betsey Trotwood, for all her kindness, in fact treats Mr Dick much like a fool of earlier centuries - as a faithful family retainer - and she certainly adheres to the belief in wisdom from the mouths of the naive.

The inadequacy of this role as a reflection of conditions in nineteenth-century England may well have been the reason for Dickens's decision to involve Mr Dick, albeit in a minor role, in the plot structure of the novel - specifically in the reuniting of Dr Strong with his wife (ch. 45) and in the exposure of Uriah Heep (ch. 54).[2] By providing Mr Dick with a function in the plot and showing him as contributing to the wellbeing of others, Dickens, consciously or otherwise, lent support to the best contemporary theory on the treatment of idiots - that of drawing out their humanity by interesting them, employing them, and giving them some-

1. Attempts to assign a greater metaphoric role to Mr Dick seem to me to force Dickens's material beyond its limits. In particular, I refer to Stanley Tick, 'The Memorializing of Mr Dick', Nineteenth Century Fiction, 24 (1969-70), pp. 142-53, which sees Mr Dick as symbolic of a central theme - the role and power of memory.
2. Manheim, 'Dickens' Fools and Madmen', p. 88, since he is primarily concerned with the medical accuracy of Dickens's portrayal sees this involvement as a weakening and falsification of the general picture. Even without reference to the accuracy of the medical 'diagnosis', Mr Dick's partial recovery does seem forced in the interests of the plot.

thing to love.[1] The combination of comic presentation and involvement in the plot results in an uneasy presentation; even while showing an attempt to integrate and explain such people in terms of society as it is, rather than see them as outside it, operating under a completely different canon of values.

More successful is the relation of both Betsey Trotwood and Mr Dick to the theme of the disciplined heart. Both lead unconventional lives by Victorian standards, and both are redeemed by their basic goodness of heart - in Mr Dick's case instinctively, in Betsey Trotwood's by the strength of her own personality which asserts itself in defiance of conventional standards.

Dickens was not the only author to use such characters as a means of providing contrast. To cite but one example, Wilkie Collins, in No Name, uses the figure of Mrs Wragge, who despite the 'buzzing' in her head and her feeble intellect exhibits simplicity, kindness and natural affection. Therefore, she provides a relief from the calculated scheming of Mr Wragge and Magdalen Vanstone. Indeed, Collins shows Magdalen at one point as finding Mrs Wragge's company an antidote to her own tormented feelings: 'the small ceaseless chatter of the poor half-witted creature who was so proud of her assistance and so happy in her company - anything was welcome to her that shut her out from the coming future ....[2] That Magdalen has not completely sacrificed human values to her own scheming is made clear by her acceptance and tolerance of Mrs Wragge and her refusal to countenance Wragge's suggestion that Mrs Wragge

1. This was suggested by Butt and Tillotson, p. 135. But of more pertinence here is their observation that there is no unifying principle in the heterogeneous topicalities in David Copperfield - such unrelated topics of contemporary discussion as model prisons, the redemption of prostitutes and the treatment of lunatics can be discovered cheek by jowl (p. 178).
2. Wilkie Collins, No Name (1862; London: Anthony Blond, 1967), Sc. 4, ch. 7.

be temporarily placed in a 'retired farm house, in the character of a lady in infirm mental health', lest she inadvertently betray their schemes.

Less obviously comic in treatment than Dickens's portrayal of Mr Dick, Mrs Wragge's affliction is nonetheless presented in a humorous vein - her trouble with cooking and her original acceptance of her husband when she was a waitress (I.2), her childish delight in the advertising circulars (III.1), her excitement and enthusiasm about dressmaking (IV.10), even her jubilation at Magdalen's recovery are all described from a comic viewpoint.

Collins does, however, successfully integrate Mrs Wragge into the plot structure since he uses her very weaknesses, like her betrayal in a moment of excitement of Magdalen's true name, as a means of developing the plot. By doing this, Collins does not need, as Dickens had with Mr Dick, to alter Mrs Wragge's basic character. Her character is used as a means of furthering the plot rather than changed in the interests of it.

These child-like innocents, although showing some characteristics of the Holy Fool are differentiated from it by their greater relationship to the environment in which they exist. The most notable of such characters in Dickens's work is Maggy Bangham in Little Dorrit. Maggy's physical appearance - with her large, limpid and almost colourless eyes, that seem very little affected by the light and to stand unnaturally still; and with her good humoured smile rendered pitiable by being constantly there - is indicative of her mental condition. She has the child-like characteristics of excitability and being easily satisfied. We soon learn that although Maggy is twenty eight years old, she has the mental age of a ten year old. These characteristics, together with her simplicity,

innocence and loyalty to Little Dorrit are qualities reminiscent of 'Holy Fool' characters like Sloppy, Toots or Tom Pinch; characters who have their origins in folk-lore; and who, by their combination of mental inadequacy (or simplicity) and goodness of heart, are a reproach and challenge to the sophisticated.[1] Certainly, Maggy's character is used as a contrast to the oversophistication of the society of which Mrs Merdle is the symbolic centre, to the pretence and affectation of those like Mr Dorrit who try to reject their past and ignore their own limitations, and to the worldly ambitious like Fanny and the Gowans. Because of this, she fulfils some of the qualities and functions of the Holy fool.[2] But there the similarity ends.

Maggy's mental defectiveness is given a tangible and intelligible basis. As such she is a study in causation which breaks the bounds of the conventional and removes her from the realm of pure symbol. It is the concrete nature of this study that Manheim saw as an example of Dickens's ability 'to paint a true mental defective'.[3]

Maggy is in fact a victim of society as much as a comment upon it. Her retardation at age ten is primarily the result of her treatment as a child. Reared by a gin-sodden grandmother who beat her, she suffered a fever which placed her in hospital at that age, a place where she was well tended and well fed and a place which mentally she has refused to leave. John Lucas denies the importance of this early life on Maggy's character and subsequent

1. J.C. Reid, Charles Dickens: 'Little Dorrit' (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), p. 37, following a suggestion by Jack Lindsay. Lucas, p. 268, also notices in Maggy elements that bring her close to a Wordsworthian perception - she is touching, pitiable, grotesque.
2. Her innocence and naivety can be exploited as when Dorrit and Tip use her as a messenger to beg money from Arthur (I.22). This, of course, is a condemnation of Dorrit's and Tip's worldly corruption, rather than of Maggy's simplicity.
3. Manheim, 'Dickens' Fools and Madmen', p. 89.

role in the novel:

> ... with Maggy ... the prison of self seems barely attributable to the process, the gin drinking grandmother who brought her up is not essential to the case of her arrested growth. It is more with Maggy, as with Mr F's aunt and even Flora, Dickens testifies to the sombre mystery of lives that are broken or warped through accident or undiscoverable chance ... None of these people is a victim of the prison of society and in presenting them for what they are Dickens resists any suggestion that there can be a simple equation between a healthy society and healthy individuals.[1]

I find Lucas's conclusion surprising in reference to a novel which is pervaded by examples where a sick society has warped and changed individuals. Mr F's aunt is certainly unexplained in such terms,[2] but Maggy's plight is not only shown to be the result of her grandmother's treatment of her (and not therefore irrelevant) but there is also the strong implication that something is wrong in a society that permits a child to be reared under such conditions. In no way can this be regarded as 'accident' or 'undiscoverable chance'. Maggy's condition is not presented as an unexplained one, and there is no suggestion that she would have been defective anyway, irrespective of her upbringing. It is in fact the assignation of a cause to Maggy's condition, a cause firmly located in the conditions of nineteenth-century England, that removes Maggy from the realm of symbolic Holy fool.

What adds to Dickens's realism in his depiction of Maggy is that he resists the temptation, succumbed to in some of his other works, to sentimentalize such a character. Beyond the advance that Maggy makes under Little Dorrit's intelligent effort to educate and train her, there is no false picture of redemption or of abnormal improvement.[3] This decision not to give a false sense of improvement makes Maggy another example of the triumph of the past, a triumph

1. Lucas, p. 269.
2. On Mr F's Aunt, see below pp. 229-233.
3. Manheim, 'Dickens' Fools and Madmen', p. 89.

also seen in such major characters as Mrs Clennam, Old Dorrit, and to a certain extent Arthur Clennam.

> For Maggy time has also stopped: After a brutal childhood she had been put in hospital. There she found a haven of security and happiness, an 'ev'nly place' which she has refused to leave. Maggy functions in the present but she found her 'marked stop' when she was ten years old and has stayed there ....[1]

In this way Maggy also reflects the 'horror and pathos of isolation',[2] and for this reason, while some of her actions (such as spilling the potatoes) are comic, as are some of her mannerisms, the over-all treatment serves a serious purpose in that it reinforces and reflects the chief themes of the novel. Her mental isolation is another aspect of the self-imprisonment that can cut human beings off from their fellows. Maggy, however, is in contrast to such characters as Mr Dorrit, Mrs Clennam and Mrs Merdle in that her isolation is not self-willed. In contrast to them, she uses such natural capacities as she has to their utmost, and although her mind may have come to its 'marked stop', she has not imprisoned her feelings and affections. In a novel where so many characters have become self-centred and repressed, Maggy's spontaneity has a therapeutic effect.[3] That such self-centredness is deeply entrenched is evident by its presence in one of the basically 'good' characters. Perhaps Dickens's most telling comment on the neglect of the child-like and innocent qualities that Maggy represents is his remark on Arthur's disregard of her at one point: 'So at last, Clennam's purpose in remaining was attained, and he could speak to Little Dorrit with nobody by. Maggy counted as nobody,

1. Roopnaraine, p. 70.
2. Lucas, p. 268.
3. I am not suggesting that Dickens sees Maggy as an ideal. Pessimistic though the novel is, there is no suggestion that the future lies in the hands of the mentally defective. Rather a balance is required between instinctive feelings and thoughtful action, a balance more clearly seen in Little Dorrit herself.

and she was by' (I.31). Clennam loses this self-centredness and some of his repressions in the course of the novel, and is redeemed by the other simple and good character, Little Dorrit.

Thus, while Maggy is a minor character in the novel and her relation to the plot structure minimal, she is used by Dickens not just as a comic curiosity, nor as a pure symbol, but as a character whose existence shows Dickens's concern with the conditions of Victorian England. She reflects and enhances the major themes of the novel.[1]

In the Victorian novel, characters who exhibit loose association of ideas are presented largely through their speech patterns. The disconnected ideas they express provide humour, and at times are a method by which those characters are given a distinct personality. Often a peripheral, or even incidental, character is given an identity precisely through some bizarre mode of speech. Occasionally some mistaken or incongruous association of ideas is funny because it occurs in a person who does not normally speak or think illogically; such incongruity often being used to reveal the associative thought processes in children - their open and imaginative minds providing a contrast to the more restricted ones of the adult world.

Where such action is repetitive however, it reveals a distinct ecccentricity inherent in the character portrayed. One of the best known of such types is Mrs Nickleby in Nicholas Nickleby,

1. It is obvious from this discussion that I see Maggy as more closely related to the novel's themes than does Reid, p. 37, who believes that she is a marginal character serving mainly to demonstrate Little Dorrit's kindness and warmth. Certainly, she is marginal and the aspect Reid mentions is part of Dickens's portrayal, but I hope to have drawn attention to other aspects of Maggy that bear relation to the central concerns of the novel.

whose speeches usually range through some five or six totally unrelated topics before she gets to the point, if indeed she has not completely digressed on a tangent. Harry Stone sees this as an attempt on Dickens's part 'to examine and represent the mind's flow and to recreate the immediacy of experience'.[1] As a literary method it is an extension of the delight in oddities of speech and bodily movements to define a character so that a character could be explained by his speech and mannerisms as distinct from the content of his speech.[2]

With Mrs Nickleby the process is extended slightly since her uncontrolled speech does reveal a discontinuity in her thought processes. Manheim sees this portrayal as an almost psychotic addiction to word association, and considers that for all its humour,

> Mrs Nickleby seems to evidence the type of free association which is clinically to be found in manics, and this type of manic flight of ideas has often seemed amusing to clinical observers who are not in the least callous or lacking in sympathy with the afflicted.[3]

The fact that Dickens's presentation can be shown to be supported by clinical observations is ultimately, however, incidental to Dickens's portrayal. Throughout the novel Mrs Nickleby's ramblings are not shown to have any real effect on her listeners, one way or the other. The prime purpose is to provide comic anecdotes from a garrulous middle-aged woman that help to suspend action. Moreover, it is not always certain whether some of Mrs Nickleby's flights of ideas are intrinsic to Dickens's conception of her

1. Harry Stone, 'Dickens and Interior Monologue', Philological Quarterly, 38 (1959), p. 52.
2. Stone, 'Dickens and Interior Monologue', p. 53, cites the example of Jingle in Pickwick Papers, where the speech and mannerisms are used, not so much to reveal the inner workings of Jingle's mind as to present a strongly differentiated and easily remembered character. In Dickens's early works there are many such characters.
3. Manheim, 'Dickens' Fools and Madmen', p. 86.

character, or whether they exist as a means of exploiting the comic possibilities of fantastic associations.

Dickens returned to this technique in Flora Finching in Little Dorrit, but with more subtlety. Flora's speech, though disorganised, does reveal certain emotional aspects of her character, pre-eminently her fantasy image of her early courting days with Arthur Clennam, her role as the statue bridge of Mr Finching, and her desire to fulfil some useful function in life. Her habit of thinking aloud reveals thoughts that are not as wildly random as Mrs Nickleby's. Although they have a certain emotional logic they are still non-rational and often discontinuous. Such a rambling discontinuity, together with the absence of punctuation in her speech is still primarily used by Dickens to provide humour through the presentation of a disorganised mind. There is no introspection into the real causes of Flora's garrulity, a garrulity that is not merely the result of her attempt to win Arthur with the same techniques she had used when much younger. But her thought patterns do reveal the extent to which Flora's mind has remained in, and been conditioned by, the past. Although she herself appears untroubled by this, and Dickens treats it in a comic vein, it does lend support to a serious theme in the novel.

The rendering of such thought processes led to a more disciplined approach in Dickens's portrayal of Mrs Lirriper in 'Mrs Lirriper's Lodgings' and 'Mrs Lirriper's Legacy'.[1] Like Mrs Nickleby and Flora Finching, Mrs Lirriper's mind is shown through her free flowing ramblings. Since the humour is more contained, however, the result is a character of greater depth and reality.[2] In so doing a

1. These formed the framework stories for the extra Christmas numbers of All the Year Round in 1863 and 1864 respectively.
2. Stone, 'Dickens and Interior Monologue', pp. 56-58, discusses Dickens's treatment of Mrs Lirriper.

rudimentary psychological study began to emerge beneath the comic presentation. As a technique it sought to show private consciousness and to explore the realm of the mind and consciousness.[1]

In no usually accepted terminology, however, would these characters be regarded as certifiably mad; their fantastic thought processes as revealed through their speech in no way hindered their performance of everyday routine actions and they have not reached the state where communication with others has become impossible. Nor is such a state represented as a possibility for them. While their speech is a type of interior monologue, it is not completely dissociated from what is occurring around them. Their speeches, unlike those of Mr F's Aunt, are sparked off by some relevant statement made before their outburst, or come from desire to communicate some definite point in relation to the time and place in which they are located.

Senile and semi-senile characters are often included to show the values of loyalty and trust that they exhibit despite their senility. More often than not they are old family friends or retainers who share in the secrets of the household in which they dwell. Being senile, they make comments and drop hints about the past and make allusions to it which suggest a knowledge that is crucial to the resolution of the plot. The novelist thereby creates an atmosphere of disquiet and suspense by means of these characters, since it is never completely clear, until the actual resolution of the plot, whether their darkly veiled hints and subterfuges are indeed allusions to real events in the past or whether they

1. This was also prominent in the explorations of the consciousness of criminals - see ch. III above. Both strands look forward to the stream-of-consciousness novel.

are the ramblings of a demented mind.

Dickens fuses the comic with the serious when dealing with such characters. Often they appear in minor or casual roles and their chief function is to reveal aspects of other characters by the manner in which other characters deal with them. Thus Old Nandy in Little Dorrit, even in his passivity shows the contrasting attitudes of Little Dorrit, Fanny and their father. In Bleak House, Mr Jellyby, although not senile, has been reduced to an almost catatonic state by the chaos of his household and his condition forms part of the indictment against Mrs Jellyby, who, while striving for charity far afield, neglected her own family.[1]

In two of his novels he deals with characters who appear to be suffering some form of senile dementia Both possess crucial secrets but feel compelled to remain silent. In Martin Chuzzlewit there is the picture of Chuffey. At the beginning, he seems to have lost all meaningful contact with any person except his old friend and employer, Anthony Chuzzlewit. A fever (an often cited reason in the Victorian novel) is given as the cause, together with the implication that too long an association with numbers as a clerk has both aided his senility and given it the direction it took. During his delirium, he never left off casting up numbers and got to so many million at last that he was never quite right after it (I.11).[2] However, in terms of the novel, the cause of his senility is immaterial. Apart from exhibiting the virtues of trust, loyalty and fidelity in a household where they are conspicuously absent, he provides a means whereby the father and son

1. A more extended and less extreme example occurs with Mr Wilfer in Our Mutual Friend, though his reason for escaping his house is somewhat different.
2. Similarly, Grandmother Smallweed's senility manifests itself by the repetition of the passions of the Smallweed's lives - money and numbers.

can be compared with each other. Alike in so many ways (Anthony boasted that the meanness and self-interest inherent in Jonas were a true reflection of his own training), Anthony's character is softened marginally by the fact that Chuffey is loyal to him and by his own tolerance of Chuffey.[1] By contrast, Jonas's character is further coarsened by his intolerance of Chuffey and by his treating him as a curiosity and not as a human being: 'If it hadn't been for the joke of it I wouldn't have let him come in today; but I thought he'd amuse you' (I.11). By this treatment, Dickens makes it clear that the peculiar habits of Chuffey that have resulted from his senile dementia are not in themselves a comic matter.

Apart from character interplay, Chuffey also plays a role in the sub-plot that is consistent with his senile nature. His ramblings and mutterings of foul play are sufficiently ominous for Jonas to fear his knowledge (II.46, 51). Jonas, of course, asserts he is mad, an opinion Mrs Gamp is only too ready to comply with since, if Chuffey is deemed to require constant vigilance, it means custom for her. Chuffey, while harmless in himself, by his very presence increases the guilty fears that already exist in Jonas:

> The night had now come, when the old clerk was to be delivered over to his keepers. In the midst of his guilty distraction, Jonas had not forgotten it .... The very deed which his fears rendered insupportable, his fears would have compelled him to commit again.
>
> But keeping the old man close, according to his design, would serve his turn .... In the meanwhile these women would keep him quiet and if the talking humour came upon him, would not be easily startled. He knew their trade. [II.5]

With the arrival of old Martin Chuzzlewit, Chuffey reveals that Jonas had not in fact murdered his father: Anthony had changed the bottle of poison but had also made Chuffey promise not to tell.

1. After Anthony's death, Chuffey transfers his loyalty to Merry, who, after her change in attitude, treats him as a friend.

Therefore Jonas is forced to acknowledge to himself that the murder of Tigg had been unnecessary. By using Chuffey as an instrument in Jonas's downfall Dickens points to the irony of Jonas being ruined by one he had discarded as a senile fool.

The role of Chuffey in the novel is serious enough, but ultimately the treatment can be considered in terms of comedy since it is clear throughout that no real harm is going to come to Chuffey as a result of his knowledge. At no point do we seriously believe that Jonas's plot to quiet him will come to fruition. The same comic distance is true in the case of Affery in Little Dorrit. She also appears semi-demented, but much of her dementia has been caused by a fear of both her husband and Mrs Clennam. She feels that she has been frightened out of one half of her life and dreamed out of the other half (I.15), and her confused behaviour helps to focus attention on the atmosphere of evil in the Clennam household. Much of the mystery in the household is created by the fact that the reader can never be quite certain whether her dreams and fears reflect the actual situation or whether they are the result of her own imagination (or imaginative interpretation of real events).

Finally, of course, she refuses to submit any longer to the fears that have made her 'a heap of confusion' (II.30) and reveals what she knows of the dealings in the Clennam household, knowledge which ultimately leads to Arthur's defining his own guilty fears, facing and thereby removing them. Affery had been brow-beaten to the extent where the realities she observed became either confused with what she had been told to believe about them, or intermingled with her own fears and suspicions. She had always been right in her facts, but always wrong in the theories she had deducted from them (II.31). With the disappearance of her husband, it is suggested

that her confusion - the feature that had made her appear demented - would be removed. Affery's antics, such as throwing her apron over her head, are treated in a comic manner, as is her dilemma when locked outside (I.29).[1] Her fears and nervous starts, while not comic in themselves, have an air of comedy about them since it is clear that these will be removed when the cause of them - the secret goings-on in the Clennam household - is disclosed.

Although Dickens's most extended study of senility, his portrayal of Nell's grandfather in The Old Curiosity Shop, is not comic or humorous at all, I feel it is appropriate to deal with it here. That the grandfather should be so very old is, as Manheim points out, 'the result of the dynamic pattern which led to his creation'.[2] That he should be also senile is a further part of the pattern since it adds pathos to Nell's flight, by turning the only possible source of adult assistance into a liability. Not only is Nell young and innocent, she is also forced to take adult responsibilities upon herself. When they decide to flee from Quilp, 'the old man looked irresolutely and helplessly, first at her, then to the left and right, then at her again, and shook his head. It was plain that she was thenceforth his guide and leader.'[3] Absence of the comic in Dickens's attitude to senile dementia here is clear by his comment that we 'call this a state of childishness, but it is the same poor hollow mockery of it, that death is of sleep' (ch. 12).

Despite the fact that the increased senility here results

1. Reid, p. 42, following a suggestion by John Wain, believes that Dickens's ability to describe physical mannerisms that indicate recognisable mental disorders 'justifies' the physical oddities of his characters. He instances Affery as a character whose mind is so deranged that she is inarticulate except when she can invoke the aid of movement.
2. Manheim, 'Dickens' Fools and Madmen', p. 90.
3. Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop (1841; London: Oxford University Press, 1951), ch. 12.

from a conventional cause in Victorian novels, a fever, Manheim sees the sketch as showing a great deal of psychological penetration:

> The first phase is that of advancing senility accompanied by some paranoid trends and by a compulsion to gamble, rationalized by his concern over his granddaughter's future. Then there occurs the seizure which accompanies Quilp's refusal to advance more money .... which looks more like an acute confusional or twilight state, leaving, after it has passed, a psychosis of a schizophrenic nature ... As he recovers his paranoid fears become more evident.[1]

After starting on the flight, the old man's senility and paranoia becomes of increasing concern to Nell in three distinct ways. First there is his return to the compulsion to gamble (ch. 29), followed by the added compulsion to steal in order to continue that gambling (chs. 30, 31). With his gambling and stealing his whole appearance seems to Nell 'like another creature in his shape, a monstrous distortion of his image, a something to recoil from, and be more afraid of because it bore a likeness to him'. Here Dickens is playing with the idea that those in the grip of a mania are physically strange in appearance. It was this physical distortion of the human form as a result of madness that was a basis of both the popular fear of madness and of some of the contempory theories of the phrenologists.[2]

Finally, comes the old man's fear that should anyone know of their flight he may be locked away as a madman. This fear is conceived in extremely lurid terms, reminiscent of much of the sensational use of madness prevalent in early Victorian melodramatic novels: 'They shall shut me up in a stone room, dark and cold

1. Manheim, 'Dickens' Fools and Madmen', p. 90. On the symptoms of senile dementia see Kolb, pp. 183-95, particularly pp. 188-89 on senility and paranoid trends; and Gelder, Gath and Mayou (eds), pp. 504-10.
2. It is this terrifying aspect of madness that was played upon by Gothic novelists, to whom this novel owes some debt. On the work of the phrenologists, who believed that physiognomy could reveal a person's mental condition, see Cooter, in Scull, pp. 58-104.

and chain me up to the wall, Nell - flog me with whips, and never let me see thee more' (ch. 19). In the novel, these fears are used to justify the continued flight from one place to another. The grandfather's senility provides pathos in that he is, however unwittingly, another of those problems - in fact, the most serious one - with which Nell has to contend and which makes her plight so pitiable until they both find refuge with the schoolmaster. Upon Nell's death, the old man's grief is at first quite contained, but he begins to habitually visit her grave, and finally loses his own will to live.

However, despite the accuracy of Dickens's picture of senility and its effects, it is not primarily the plight of the senile that has motivated him here. References to the madhouse add to the general nightmare quality of the novel, increase the fears with which Nell and the old man have to deal, and give plausibility to their continual moving on. The possibility of the madhouse is not a seriously considered issue in the novel - there seems no likelihood of his ever actually being put there. To return to Manheim's comment that the grandfather is very old to serve the dynamic pattern of the novel, I would add that he is made senile, and therefore helpless, to gain maximum pathos from that dynamic pattern.

Discussion of comic madness inevitably involves a consideration of the grotesque and its aesthetic. The most fundamental characteristic of the grotesque is that it is a mixed form; a form in which elements that are dissimilar are combined in unstable, conflicting and paradoxical relationships.[1] This much is agreed

1. In this discussion on the grotesque I am much indebted to Hollington, in particular his ch. 1, where he discusses the

upon by the various critics. More controversial are the historical and interpretative meanings of the grotesque. The two extremes are represented by Wolfgang Kayser and Mikhail Bakhtin, the latter's work being, in part, a refutation of Kayser's point of view.[1]

Kayser emphasises the sinister and disturbing in the grotesque and sees grotesque characters as estranged and alienated from society in general. The use of such characters in literature he therefore sees as 'an attempt to invoke and subdue the demonic aspects of the world'.[2] He regarded insanity itself as one of these demonic aspects:

> In the insane person, human nature itself seems to have taken on ominous overtones ... it is as if an impersonal force, an alien and inhuman spirit had entered the soul. The encounter with madness is one of the basic experiences of the grotesque which life forces on us.[3]

Clearly, Kayser is not considering those forms of madness (such as that found in the idiot figure) which can be regarded as non-terrifying, in the views expressed here.

Such a concept of the grotesque obviously has very little relevance to the world of comedy. In Dickens's work this form of the grotesque is seen in the early horror stories in Pickwick Papers and in some of the villains of the early novels - Fagin, Arthur Gride, Quilp. In the character of Quilp, for example, while the comic approach is evident in the exhuberance of his personality, he also reflects some of the malign aspects of the grotesque and it is implied that his physical oddity is the cause

tradition of the grotesque and its historical antecendents. His references in that chapter, and in his bibliography, pp. 250-54, are a convenient source for relevant works on the grotesque.

1. Wolfgang Kayser, The Grotesque in Art and Literature, trans. Ulrich Weisstein (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963). Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Boston, Mass. : M.I.T. Press, 1968).
2. Kayser, p. 188.
3. Kayser, p. 184.

of his mental persecution of Little Nell (and others). Such a simple correlation between the physical and the mental changed as Dickens's art matured, though it is never fully obliterated. His descriptions of terrible grotesques were in keeping with the fundamental religious and cultural background that connected the grotesque with sin and hell. The final defeat of these characters in the novels can be interpreted as symbolic of the suppression of the demonic aspects by the more humane ones that the Victorians liked to believe were the fundamental basis of civilized society. Despite their differences, this was a basic premise beneath the thinking of both Dickens and John Ruskin.[1]

John Ruskin distinguished two types of grotesque - the comic and the 'terrible'. He believed that even with the terrible grotesques, there was still an aesthetic need for an element of the ludicrous since it was an affirmation of the triumph of Christ that Lucifer should be made fun of. It was also important, however, that a balance between the ludicrous and the terrible be maintained lest Lucifer appear too attractive.[2]

Bakhtin, speaking from a non-Christian point of view ignores the balance advocated by Ruskin. In opposition to Kayser's view, Bakhtin constructed an alternative tradition of the grotesque, arguing that the 'devils' inherent in the grotesque were not sinister or frightening until Christianity made them so. His idea of the grotesque figure is that of an ambivalent figure expressing an unofficial point of view, its origins being in the carnival

1. Hollington, p. 211.
2. For a survey of Ruskin's views of the grotesque, see Hollington, ch. 10. Ruskin's comments on the grotesque are largely to be found in The Stones of Venice, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (1851, 1853; London: G. Allen, 1903), and Modern Painters III, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (1856; London: G. Allen, 1904).

and the market place. For him, grotesque art is a popular anti-classical tradition, 'ambivalent and contradictory ... ugly, monstrous, hideous, from the point of view of "classic" aesthetics ...', [1] but fulfilling a fundamental need for laughter. As such, it is never to be taken with absolute seriousness.[2]

Bakhtin's definition of the grotesque certainly seems a more appropriate one to describe many of the minor characters that abound in Dickens's novels, particularly the early ones. The fat boy in Pickwick Papers is one such example. While many of the features observed by Dickens in the fat boy can be corroborated by medical authorities as symptoms of a clinical condition,[3] the main purpose for Dickens's portrayal is not to show concern for the boy's mental condition. Instead, he uses the fat boy's condition to help precipitate comic situations.[4] For example, when Mr Snodgrass becomes trapped in Mr Wardle's bedroom he asks the fat boy to indicate his plight to Mr Pickwick. But the alarming methods by which the fat boy tries to communicate secretly with Mr Pickwick lead Pickwick and his friends to consider him either drunk or mad. The fat boy becomes so confused that his genuine purpose in trying to gain Mr Pickwick's attention remains undisclosed (ch. 54).

1. Bakhtin, p. 25. Bakhtin continues an idea already expounded by Thomas Wright. Wright saw the grotesque as the expression of a 'fundamental "need for laughter which was human and natural", forever expressing itself in history despite repression and prohibition' (Hollington, p. 4). Wright's book, The History of Caricature and Grotesque, was first published in 1865.
2. Axton, p. 31, would agree with this. Speaking of grotesque comedy he finds that its peculiar effects are in the balance or juxtaposition of discordant elements. Its domain is the laughable possibilities of incongruity, disproportion and incoherence.
3. See Manheim, 'Dickens' Fools and Madmen', p. 74. Manheim shows that the fat boy's condition is the result of organic disturbance, what Dr Brain called narcolepsy and what more recently has been isolated and termed a 'Pickwickian syndrome'.
4. Possibly also to avenge wrongs done to Dickens as a child, if the fat boy is indeed based on a lad named James Budden, as Manheim, 'Dickens' Fools and Madmen', p. 74, suggests.

The emphasis is on the comic effect of the boy's antics rather than concern for the boy's predicament. The whole incident dissolves into the reconciliation between Mr Snodgrass and Mr Wardle, the fat boy slipping unnoticed out of the scene.[1]

Perhaps the most illustrative of Dickens's novels for the use of comic grotesques is Nicholas Nickleby. The novel abounds in characters whose contact with reality is tenuous, to say the least. Their main purpose is to relieve the tension created by the melodramatic main stories. These characters appear and disappear in the novel on the basis of their contact with one of the Nickleby family. The whole adventure of Nicholas with Crummles's Theatrical Troupe is perhaps the most notable case. In dealing with the Crummles family Dickens at times seems to satirize the over-theatricality of their performances,[2] but at other times his chief concern is the general harmony and animation of the group (despite minor altercations), breathing a life and freshness markedly absent from the novel up to that point. What does become increasingly apparent, however, is that the Crummles Theatrical troupe live their lives off the stage in very much the same way as they do on stage. Emotions and gestures are played out to the full, and it is difficult to dissociate the individual persons from their acting roles.

Dickens, while mildly satirizing the group, passes no judgement on their lack of concern for the serious issues of life. The Crummles are able to wander through life on their own plane, and Dickens's attitude to them remains ambivalent. Whereas Nicholas might express

1. R.B. Henkle, Comedy and Culture: England 1820-1900 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 117, regards such treatment as shallow, viewing Pickwick Papers as 'comfortably bourgeoise, accommodating eccentricity so long as the behaviour is socially harmless'. While this is true, the implication that it should not have been so suggests that Pickwick Papers ought to have been a different kind of book.
2. See especially, chs. 23 and 24.

a need to conceal his identity as an actor because of his belief in the lowliness of the profession, this appears to be a reflection of Victorian ideas rather than Dickens's own firmly held belief. What the group does provide - and Dickens makes this quite clear - is a homely atmosphere. The generally lenient treatment given to the group shows that Dickens himself saw no great disgrace in them or their profession.

Another group whose whole relationship seems to be played out as if on a stage is the Mantalinis.[1] The whole unreality of this relationship is not meant to be taken seriously, even though Madame Mantalini's blindness to her husband's antics, indolence and financial extravagances, causes her to lose her business. Dickens's only comment seems to be that such people do exist and that an unrealistic approach to life is disastrous in business. Their connection with the story is simply the result of the fact that Dickens has Kate find employment there, and that Ralph was able to capitalize on Madame Mantalini's blindness to her errant husband. Similarly, perhaps the most satirized of all the comic grotesques in this novel, Julia Wittiterly, appears in the role of employer for Kate. Mrs Wittiterly's affectation of 'too much soul', aided and abetted by her husband, has reached the stage where she has ceased to take any part in the surrounding world, or even to observe what is actually going on around her. Her actions are all contrived to display her own poetic delusions, and visitors are merely the audience for whom she becomes a central character in her own drama. Dickens introduces her as such:

> The lady had an air of sweet insipidity, and a face of engaging paleness; there was a faded look about her, and about the furniture, and about the house altogether. She was reclining on a sofa in such a very unstudied attitude, that she might

1. Nicholas Nickleby, chs. 17, 21, 44 and 64.

> have been taken for an actress all ready for the first scene in a ballet, and only waiting for the drop curtain to go up. [ch. 21]

So complete is her self-delusion that any dispelling of illusions is useless - as Kate discovers when appealing to her for help against the attentions of Sir Mulberry Hawk:

> Mrs Wittiterly received the attack upon her veracity with exemplary calmness, and listened with the most heroic fortitude to Kate's account of her own sufferings. But allusion being made to her being held in disregard by the gentlemen, she evinced violent emotion, and this blow was no sooner followed up by a remark concerning her seniority, than she fell back upon the sofa, uttering dismal screams. [ch. 28]

Thus ended Kate's employment with Mrs Wittiterly, and the latter's role in the novel. Obviously we are meant to disapprove of the indolence and affectation of Mrs Wittiterly, and such characteristics are opposed elsewhere in the novel by characters who achieve real rewards for their honesty, integrity and industriousness. But in Mrs Wittiterly's case there seems no reason for her to change when both her husband and her doctor condone her behaviour and she is in a financial position that does not necessitate any change.[1]

Such comic grotesques proliferate in the early novels and appear in a less exaggerated form in the later ones, and it would be pointless to enumerate all of them here. While they may throw some incidental light on the social or personal problems of the time this is not their main purpose. Their chief function seems to me a dual one. On the one hand, they cumulatively provide the background of variety and life which Dickens saw as essential to nineteenth-century England in general, and London in particular,

1. She is another version of the affected lady who wrote the 'Ode to an Expiring Frog' in Pickwick Papers (ch. 15). A much more subtle and more realistic portrayal of the indolent society dame occurs later with Mrs Merdle in Little Dorrit. In the later novel, Mrs Merdle's actions are related to an overall theme of the novel, and the artifice that surrounds her life is destroyed when her husband commits suicide. With Mrs Wittiterly there is no suggestion that such artifice is to cease. Kate's outburst provides a temporary set-back only.

with the result that a feeling of the vibrancy of everyday life is created as a realistic background for his stories. On the other hand, by their variety and individuality, they reveal a society that is fragmented. Each individual remains separate and distinct from his fellow men and is rarely able to participate in any real community of feeling.[1] In later novels, Dickens was to treat this fragmentation, which in essence can be regarded as an alienation from fellow beings, with less comic gusto and more seriousness.

The change in approach is discernible in what is perhaps his most memorable, certainly his most popular, grotesque figure, Mrs Gamp in Martin Chuzzlewit. From her first appearance we are made aware of her grossness, slovenliness, opportunism, drunkenness and general coarseness (ch. 19). But we are also captivated by the sheer vitality of her speech and her ability to turn the conversation to her own advantage, with or without the aid of the mythical Mrs Harris. In this way Dickens manages to endear us to the literary character of Mrs Gamp so that we feel affection for her despite her habits, in much the same way as Shakespeare created sympathy for Falstaff largely through the vehicle of language.

On her further entrances in the novel, the seductive quality of language still prevails, but as Arthur Clayborough astutely noted, the continued appeal of Mrs Gamp has its roots in something deeper than Dickens's sense of humour and love of the odd and bizarre in speech. Clayborough sees this as due to the earthiness in her speech; an earthiness which reveals the fundamental realities of London life, however much these realities are submerged beneath the eccentricities of her speech. Speaking of her conversation

1. It is probably the existence of this community of feeling in the Crummles family that causes Dickens to treat them sympathetically, despite their theatricality.

with the Pinches on the wharf (ch. 40), he noted that while Mrs Gamp is at her most amusing, the sheer earthiness in the passage is a vital element in its effect. In such a passage, however much heightened and coloured, there is contact with a reality which simultaneously repelled and fascinated Dickens - the life of the poor London streets.[1] It is not only the content of her speech, however, but the whole character of Mrs Gamp that has this alternating quality of fascination and repulsion, and it is this that creates the grotesque about her. We may not be sure exactly what Mrs Gamp's response to a situation will be (this differentiates her from a mechanical caricature) but we can be sure of our ambivalent feeling toward her. This ambivalence prevents us forming any definite moral attitude about her, despite the fact that she represents some of the more deplorable aspects of medical treatment in mid-Victorian England, and is intended in part as a criticism of them.

This suspension of judgement is further enhanced by the fact that her most distinguished grotesque characteristic, the invention of Mrs Harris, not only reveals a fundamental human need for comfort, solace, and even self-survival, but also indicates the extent to which she has become emotionally and psychically removed from her fellow humans, despite her seeming interaction with them on a day-to-day basis. While this need for Mrs Harris is indicative of a childlike quality in Mrs Gamp,[2] it is also a fundamental indication of her mental state:

> Lacking family and friends, removed from normality by alcoholism and selfishness, she withdraws to an imaginery world where the mythical Mrs Harris alone provides fidelity, recognition and companionship. Sairey's turbulent stream of consciousness belongs to the world of fantasy, a grotesque world because in it neither birth nor death is cataclysmic or even very

1. Arthur Clayborough, The Grotesque in English Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 219.
2. Clayborough, p. 221.

important.[1]

This is a sympathetic interpretation of Mrs Gamp's isolation.

A less charitable view is that of Hillis Miller. He sees Mrs Gamp's invention of Mrs Harris as an attempt to do without people by creating a reflexive relation with her alter ego; such a splitting of her personality allowing her to perform selfish acts as though they were acts of public service and generosity. It is not simply a splitting up into what Dorothy Van Ghent calls 'a me half and an it half', but a division into two subjectives, a self which exists and a self which recognises and justifies that existence. The relationship between Mrs Gamp and Mrs Harris is a most fully developed example of such internal dialogue.[2] Hillis Miller believes this to be evidence that such characters are unwilling to consider human reciprocity, and instinctively try to do without other people. The 'instinctively' is instructive. Without an independent background for Mrs Gamp (other than the one she provides for herself), it is not clear whether her isolation is the result of a conscious decision made in the past, or whether it is a reaction, possibly instinctive, to the experiences she has had in the past. We are left uncertain of which is to blame - the individual or the society that has moulded the individual. In terms of the novel this fundamental question is bypassed where Mrs Gamp is concerned. This is not to deny that she is selfish, but to assert that she is presented in the novel simply within the time structure of the story, and that our ambiguous response to her is partly the result of the absence of any personal history that might explain her and help us to form some moral judgment.

1. R.J. Dunn, 'Dickens and the Tragi-Comic Grotesque', Studies in the Novel, 1 (1969), pp. 149-50.
2. Hillis Miller, p. 123.

Some of the ambiguity in the reader's response is also the result of the fact that despite her 'vices', Mrs Gamp is exceedingly funny. Because of the humorous way in which Mrs Gamp refers to Mrs Harris it is easy to lose sight of the fact that, Mrs Gamp, for whatever reason, has reached the stage where the fictional Mrs Harris is fundamental to her existence. Thus when Betsey Prig denies Mrs Harris's existence (ch. 49), we sense that Mrs Gamp's whole personality is seriously threatened. But with surprising resilience Mrs Gamp counter-attacks Betsey to reaffirm Mrs Harris, and, although she may get maudlin drunk after Betsey's departure, and have difficulty pronouncing Mrs Harris's name when she takes up her appointment with Jonas Chuzzlewit (ch. 51), in her final appearance in the book she can speak of her imaginary friend with the same ease as formerly. Mrs Gamp may well be psychically alienated and estranged, but she seems content with that estrangement. To argue as to whether this is the result of necessity or not is to pursue a philosophical enquiry which Dickens himself does not seem to consider.

Mrs Gamp's character remains intact despite her experiences in the novel. Nor do we really feel that Martin Chuzzlewit's denunciation of her in the final chapter, when he suggests 'the expediency of a little less liquor, and a little more humanity, and a little less regard for herself, and a little more regard for her patients, and perhaps a trifle of additional honesty' (ch. 52), will have any lasting effect, even though it does temporarily reduce her to faint tremblings. Sairey Gamp is in fact grotesque, irrespective of her profession and of her lower-class origins. This grotesqueness works against any social criticism that Dickens wished to make. Though she could be regarded as supporting a general theme of selfish-

ness as exhibited in the main story, the extent to which her resilient character suggests that Chuzzlewit's admonition of her at the end of the novel will be ineffectual, belies that role.[1]

Thus we are unable to make any final judgement on her character. One can deplore, as Mr Chuzzlewit does, the slovenliness and lack of care that she exhibits as a nurse, but the elements that make her a comic grotesque character defy ordinary levels of judgement. This is not simply because she is comic, but rather because she is different and unique. The ultimate feeling is that the world would be a duller place without such characters as Mrs Gamp.

Very few of these grotesque characters could be considered mad, but only as estranged from the general prevalent social strands of their time, whether the middle-class or lower-class milieu. What they do reveal, of course, is the tendency then, as now, to regard actions that are not in accordance with the prevailing social standards as at least abnormal, at worst insane. Though Dickens does not declare them to be such, it is clear that they belong to a different world from that of say, Martin Chuzzlewit junior. All are deviant, and what distinguishes characters like Mr F's aunt in Little Dorrit from characters like Mrs Wittiterly is a difference in degree rather than in kind.

Many of these grotesques and semi-grotesques, while presented in an exaggerated manner, embody some element of truth beneath the exaggeration. Each has basic characteristics that we can recognise in people we have met, or with which we can identify. This differentiates them from Mrs Nickleby's neighbour who has

1. Dickens in his preface to the 'Cheap Edition' of the novel (1849), stated that his object was 'to exhibit in a variety of aspects the commonest of all vices; to show how selfishness propagates itself ...' (Penguin ed. p. 39). Forster, vol. 1, p. 314, confirms that the desire to show selfishness as a theme was part of Dickens's original conception of the novel.

such obviously conventional mannerisms that we stand aloof from his antics and do not feel any empathy or sympathy for him. The traits that the later grotesque characters have in common with ordinary humans lessens their fearful aspect.

What is difficult, however, is to relate such incidental truths to the novels as a whole, so as to give these characters some relevance beyond comic relief or entertainment value. Axton saw this problem as inherent in grotesque comedy. Speaking of grotesque comedy in the theatre, he pointed out that its permanently caricatural bias always suggests that character operates (as it does in pantomine and burlesque) by the manic persistence of a few eccentric traits. Caricature of this kind may make use of comedy, but it is finally a different form. For comedy innocuously attributes dignity and greatness on some secure basis of real values; but burlesquerie, in effect, aims to do away with familiar footholds of tradition and convention. In comedy, a certain detachment is maintained which is not proper to true grotesque. With the latter we find ourselves becoming more involved than we had expected, especially since no unequivocal moral response is indicated. This insecurity of moral viewpoint arises because the grotesque does not try to teach, warn or arouse compassion, but simply portrays its vision of the ludicrous or incomprehensible in the commonplace. The grotesque unsettles perspectives derived from tradition and convention.[1]

It is this insecurity of moral viewpoint that makes any discussion of these characters difficult. In Dickens's work the grotesque characters exert a dual response. Whereas the grotesque nature of many of their mannerisms and actions calls for judgement

1. Axton, pp. 31-32.

to be suspended, the human characteristics they exhibit seem to require that some value judgement be made. Ultimately their value would seem to lie in their capacity to unsettle tradition perspectives, as Axton noted. But it is important here to consider to what exactly this 'unsettling' of attitudes is meant to lead. Our reactions to these characters are more often than not ambivalent.[1] The combination in them of the grotesque and the human results in characters whose relationship to the social world of the novel oscillates between alienation and integration.

The grotesques in the earlier novels are chiefly used for comic effect only. We are made aware that their interpretation of the world of reality is different from that of the heroes and heroines (who always espouse middle-class conventional values), but, on the whole, having been made aware of this, we are firmly directed back to the world of heroes and heroines. In the later novels such characters are given a more pertinent relation to the thematic concerns.[2] Their grotesque mannerisms are presented not merely for comic interest or as individual curiosities, but also to reveal aspects of a central theme. This duality of purpose had begun to occur with Sairey Gamp in Martin Chuzzlewit,[3] and

1. Michael Steig, 'Structure and the Grotesque in Dickens: Dombey and Son; Bleak House', The Centennial Review, 14 (1970), p. 314, convincingly argues that this ambivalence is partly the result of the superimposition of comedy onto the grotesque. Steig formulates a definition of the grotesque which combines elements of both Bakhtin's and Kayser's viewpoints. He defines it as 'the uncanny (repressed material recalled to the consciousness) modified (defended against) by comedy, caricature or exhuberance of artistic invention (three techniques which often overlap'.
2. This greater control over grotesque characters, which I believe is apparent in these novels, forces me to disagree with Henkle, p. 159, when he asserts that Dickens gives the impression of overindulging, from Bleak House onwards, in odd characters who do little to advance the insights of the book. I feel that Henkle's comment is far more applicable to the earlier novels.
3. Of course the isolated grotesque did continue to appear. One example is Charley, the pawnbroker whom David meets on the road

continues in Bleak House, where the many characters, grotesque and otherwise, are interwoven or related in some way to the central thematic concerns of the novel.

Relevant to the discussion here is Dickens's treatment of the Smallweed family. The Smallweeds are presented as comical grotesques but it is a very grim humour that prevails. With grandfather and grandmother Smallweed we have the physical and mental grotesque. Grandfather Smallweed, although still mentally alert, has been reduced to a physical mechanism which is in constant need of 'shaking-up'. The grandmother has become imbecilic and childlike.[1] With grim irony this is regarded as a desirable condition for this family, since it is the lack of childlike qualities that has made the younger Smallweeds, Judy and her brother, into beings who live only for the making and saving of money (ch. 21). Both have lost a sense of the natural and spontaneous, and both are incapable of any human interaction that is non-calculating. Indeed, they never seem to have experienced these qualities, and it is clear that Dickens regards their development as unnatural.

Dickens's description of the Smallweeds are vicious to the point of cruelty. The whole family is described as a family of grotesques. They are completely dehumanized - seen as a collection of monkeys going through their routine motions in response to the pursuit of money, without any real concern for each other, let alone any outsider. Grandfather Smallweed displays open hostility

to Dover (David copperfield, ch. 13). As a grotesque he is given some seemingly terrifying aspects, but much of the fear he engenders is the result of David's own mental state, as is evident from the fact that the local boys are not in the least afraid of him.

1. Many of the parrot-like outbursts are in reference to money, the absorbing interest of the family. The repetitive altercations between her and grandfather Smallweed and his derogatory remarks about her are presented as normal and usual in this family group.

in all his actions. The portrayal of this hostility, however, is contained within a comic framework. On one occasion, for example, Dickens uses the comic method of expanding upon an idea to gain humour from the cumulative effect of a barrage of language, irrespective of the content of the speech:

> 'Will somebody give me a quart pot?' exclaims her exasperated husband, looking helplessly about him, and finding no missile within his reach. 'Will somebody oblige me with a spitoon? Will somebody hand me anything hard and bruising to pelt at her? You hag, you cat, you dog, you brimstone barker!' Here Mr Smallweed, wrought up to the highest pitch by his own eloquence, actually throws Judy at her grandmother in default of anything else, by butting that young virgin at the old lady with such force as he could muster, and then dropping into his chair in a heap. [ch. 33]

Humorous though the presentation of this incident is, the absence of any humane feeling on the part of grandfather Smallweed modifies our comic response. This absence of any sincere feeling has been transmitted to the younger Smallweeds, both of whom are portrayed as resenting their grandfather's continued existence. Inspector Bucket notes the capacity of this family to act only in their own interest. Speaking of how he had obtained old Jarndyce's will, he reveals that the Smallweeds, not having settled how to make a market of it, had quarrelled about it. He therefore offered twenty pounds, whereupon the avaricious grandchildren 'split' on the grandfather and then on each other. 'There ain't one of the family wouldn't sell the other for a pound or two, except the old lady - and she's only out of it because she's too weak in her mind to drive a bargain' (ch. 62).

What makes the Smallweed family so grotesque is not that they are obviously mad, but rather that their obsession with money-making has dehumanized them. Krook is another more fearful grotesque, and his death is equally grotesque. While grotesque, he is not, as Allan Woodcourt points out, clinically mad (ch. 14), although

he is given a monomania (the word that occurs in Victorian novels with a loose meaning covering anything from mild obsession to raving incoherence) about wills, deeds and learning to read (ch. 32). However, his mannerisms are such that other characters either fear him or doubt his sanity, and are therefore apprehensive about him. The dehumanization and lack of any warmth of feeling in these grotesques makes them more malign and less comical than the earlier ones. In a novel where predators and victims is a constant theme, the Smallweeds are predators. It is this as much as the various ways in which they are interwoven into the plot that gives this family their relevance to the novel as a whole. Chancery, of course, is the biggest and most central predator, engulfing all those whose lives are caught up in it. It is as mechanical in its operations as the Smallweeds are in theirs. Its sole function seems to be to perpetuate the legal profession. Being an institution it could, and did, ruin its victims with an impersonality that Dickens found deplorable. The whole opening chapter creates an atmosphere of the lack of concern and dehumanization that prevails in Chancery and which pervades the novel in all areas where human relations and individuals are seen as secondary to institutionalized procedures or grand visions.[1] Thus the Smallweeds family are yet another aspect of the central theme, showing in microcosm what Chancery does on a large scale.

Fundamental to this treatment of the grotesque in Bleak House is the suppression of the comic exuberance of the earlier grotesques,

1. Grand visions and charity are satirized in Mrs Jellyby and Mrs Pardiggle. The impersonality of Chancery has caused the ruin of countless people and turned the minds of others like Miss Flite and the Man from Shropshire 'who can by no means be made to understand that the Chancellor is legally ignorant of his existence after making it desolate for a quarter of a century' (ch. 1). On the madness that is a result of involvement with Chancery, see ch. IV above, pp. 145-55.

an exuberance which suggested that such grotesqueness was a liberating force for individuals. The grotesque in the Smallweeds, and others in this novel, is now viewed as a restriction or limitation, and as a reflection of a world which is alien, strange and incomprehensible. The grotesque features of these characters have become ritualized and formalized. In Bleak House there is a proliferation of brilliantly conceived grotesque characters who resemble music-hall performers doing a series of turns: they appear and disappear a number of times, repeating essentially the same act, the function of which is to contribute to the broad social and moral meanings of the novel. But there are almost none of the extended flights of verbal brilliance that were prevalent in such characters as Pecksniff and Mrs Gamp, who could always manage to surprise us with the daring of their improvisations. With the characters in Bleak House, we may be delighted but we are rarely surprised.[1]

This altered perspective in the grotesque continues in Dickens's later novels where, particularly in Little Dorrit and Our Mutual Friend, the grotesque is seen not only as alien but as a form of imprisonment for the grotesque character - the grotesqueness sets him apart and isolates him from his fellow human beings. No longer is grotesquerie regarded as a basically comic attribute but it becomes a tragic limitation, since it denies the individual any meaningful social contact with his fellow human beings. This attitude leads Dickens to a more tragi-comic use of the grotesque. Such an altered use results in a form of grotesque that has some elements of Kayser's definition together with some of Bakhtin's. The grotesques have a touch of the sinister about them, but to no great extent can they be considered threatening. This was still reserved

1. Steig, 'Structure and the Grotesque in Dickens', p. 328.

for those who are clearly meant to be taken as villains - people like Mr Flintwinch in Little Dorrit. While such characters have certain grotesque features it is not essential to their villainy that they be grotesque.

One character whose grotesqueness, while comic in general presentation, does seem more malevolent and sinister is Mr F's aunt in Little Dorrit. For this reason Alan Wilde sees her as firmly at the symbolic centre of the novel. Because of her irrationality, inflexibility, and her unmotivated bitterness, she represents the forces of darkness and, as such, is set in opposition to Little Dorrit as representative of the forces of light and goodness.[1] With Wilde's belief that Mr F's aunt is related to the major concerns of the novel I have no argument, but to see her at the analogical centre of the novel is, to my mind, to assign her a role inconsistent with her few appearances in the novel[2] and with the actual extent of her power over others, symbolic or otherwise. Wilde himself acknowledges the difficulty in taking too seriously a character that is, at least in part, humorous. Mr F's aunt belongs with Dickens's great eccentrics - everything about her elicits the fun that is connected with the incongruous and the unexpected. However, her final resonance is anything but comic, and the responses of the other characters to her are uncomfortable enough to make laughing at her risky or ill-advised. But it will not do, either, to treat her simply as a madwoman.[3]

Wilde sees her as a symbol of the malevolent forces abroad in Little Dorrit, a victim of, as well as a vehicle for, the dehumanizing powers in the novel. Physically she is certainly

1. Alan Wilde, 'Mr F's Aunt and the Analogical Structure of Little Dorrit', Nineteenth Century Fiction, 19 (1964-65), pp. 33-44.
2. She appears five times: I.13, I.23, I.35, II.9, II.34.
3. Wilde, p. 35.

mechanical and stoney (I.13), and her dehumanization is further emphasized by the fact that she has no individual name. Her comments defy the normal use of conversation as a means of communication. Her remarks, 'being totally uncalled for by anything said by anybody, and traceable to no association of ideas, confounded and terrified the mind'. Mr F's aunt threw in observations 'on some system of her own, and it may have been ingenious or even subtle: but the key to it was wanted' (I.13).[1]

Significantly, it is only Arthur that her remarks have the power to terrify. On others they have no effect. Flora treats her as 'lively' and goes about her business as if the remarks were not said or meant, placating her on the occasions when she seems intractible; Panks answers her as though she has said something that requires an answer, thereby treating her comments as harmless and meaningless. In part, of course, Arthur must react since many of her remarks are directed particularly toward him. His response is to be 'confused and baffled'. Wilde sees in her comments an emotional logic expressing bitterness, hostility, disgust and defiance against Arthur. Arthur, of course, is at a loss to know why he has been singled out as the recipient of her invective. Flora regards this personal resentment simply as evidence of the fact that Mr F's aunt takes 'dislikes to people'. In terms of the novel, however, Wilde is right to ask why it is Arthur against whom this malevolence is directed. He concluded that since the point of view in the book is largely Arthur's, this lends significance to the fact that the animus of Mr F's aunt is directed completely

1. Reid, p. 25, finds Mr F's Aunt's surrealistic inconsequentialities sinister because, while they are truly funny in the line of Dickensian eccentrics, they have, also, a vehemence and a maniacal rage that is frightening. Instead of diminishing the seriousness of the book, Dickens's humour adds to the almost nightmarish quality.

against him. Her hatred is for the most reliable, the most representative, and in many ways the most normal (or, more accurately, normative) character in the book.[1]

What is important, however, is to note that her capacity to operate upon Clennam's fears, guilts and doubts is only possible because he has those guilty fears - guilts that have been planted in him from his early childhood, nurtured during his lonely life in the east, and brought to fruition by the atmosphere of sane malevolence which surrounds his step-mother. Where Clennam is concerned, she is far more central, just as she is in the lives of the Dorrits. It is she who has warped his values and burdened him with a sense of guilt. Mr F's aunt only really operates on fears that are already present, and these fears need not be the irrational ones she succeeds in evoking in him. For this reason I do not see her as central - the central forces of the novel that succeed in warping human nature reflect a distortion of rational thought, rather than a retreat from it - but rather as one extreme, of which there are varying degrees in the novel. Wilde at one point acknowledges this:

> The madness of Mr F's Aunt, her withdrawal from sense and sanity, is her response to the pressures of the world she lives in and it is, in its turn only the extreme form of the retreat from reality in which so many of the characters indulge in order to make their lives bearable.[2]

Her capacity to obstruct the good forces is minimal: once Arthur faces his own past and his guilty association with it, then her effect on him is by-passed, even though she herself still resents him, as her behaviour at the end of the book reveals. When Flora gives Little Dorrit her blessing for the marriage, she brings her aunt with her and the aunt appears 'past bending by any means short

1. Wilde, p. 41.
2. Wilde, p. 43.

of powerful mechanical pressure' (II.34). But, it is not the case, as Wilde claims, that the marriage can only take place when Mr F's aunt is safely out of the way; the marriage is possible once Arthur has accepted his past and has learnt the lessons of love and self-forgetfulness. The 'baleful glances toward the Marshalsea' are rather indicative that her power over Arthur is lost. Though Wilde sees the union of Amy and Arthur as personal and not therefore indicative of anything universal, in terms of Mr F's aunt' hostility, however irrational and unknown in its origin, it too was only personal. Her final appearance is not so much that of having been 'removed temporarily from the scene, for the moment overpowered but not finally overthrown',[1] but rather one where her grotesqueness and intractability are made subordinate to the comical, almost farcical aspects of her behaviour. The abundance of humour in Dickens's portrayal dispels the more terrifying aspects of her character:

> Flora got through the remainder of the day in perfect good humour; though occasionally embarrassed by the consequences of an idle rumour which circulated among the credulous infants of the neighbourhood, to the effect that an old lady had sold herself to the pie-shop to be made up, and was then sitting in the pie-shop parlour, declining to complete her contract.[2] [II.34]

This is not to deny that Mr F's aunt reflects the major concerns of the novel. She provides a variation on the imprisonment motif and, by her irrationality, she contributes to the general atmosphere of pessimism against which the 'good' characters operate. My argument against Wilde is only in the degree to which he makes her central to the symbolic structure.

Mr F's aunt's isolation is such that she herself is oblivious

1. Wilde, p. 44.
2. The person made into sausages or pies was a stock in trade of grotesque humour, deriving from as far back as the ancestors of the Punch and Judy show. In Dickens's own work, for example, there is the story told by Sam Weller of the pork shop that sold sausages and of the missing husband whose buttons turned up in one of the sausages (Pickwick Papers, ch. 31).

to the fact that she is isolated. In Our Mutual Friend, however, Dickens shows several grotesque characters who are alienated from the warmth and security of human fellowship, but are aware of their isolation and try, by various means, to come to terms with it. The struggle of these characters to lead positive lives in a world from which they feel excluded makes their plight a serious one. R.J. Dunn argues convincingly that this serious note, combined with the humorous manner in which they are presented makes these characters tragi-comic grotesques.[1] Silas Wegg, Mr Venus and Jenny Wren all exhibit different aspects of the grotesque.[2] Although humorous in much of their actions and speech, as characters in a particular social setting, and because they reflect major themes in the novel, they are to be taken seriously.

Silas Wegg, as Dunn points out, is not simply what Dunn refers to as a 'sportive rogue', added to the novel to give colour and variety, but also typifies the general theme of isolation, and he is further related to the broader issues in the novel by virtue of his being a scavenger. In his creation of an illusory life for himself, Wegg illustrates comically the social fragmentation and the isolation that Dickens emphasizes throughout this novel. Fragmented both physically and mentally, he does not, like earlier comic grotesques, make his illusions attractive to the reader, but instead, leads the reader to a better understanding of the kind of world that produces such a sportive grotesque rogue.[3]

1. Dunn, pp. 147-55.
2. Dunn also discusses Bradley Headstone as an example of a terrifying grotesque, manifested in the complexity of his inner mental pressures rather than in outwardly grotesque mannerisms. I have dealt with the mental instability of Bradley elsewhere: see pp. 112-22.
3. Dunn, p. 152. He reflects what Hollington regards as a general development in Dickens's novels. Speaking of both comic grotesques and the more horrific ones, Hollington remarks: 'One might perhaps think of Dickens's development ... as a passage

Coming to such an understanding, and making a judgement upon it are, however, two different things. We can deplore a society that isolates such people as Wegg, but what is our final judgement of Wegg supposed to be? Here we find Dickens ambiguous. Wegg's illusory life is not sufficient to sustain him - he still yearns for and acquires entry into the Boffin household. His own awareness of his isolation belies his use of an illusory family as a shield from that isolation. So he evokes sympathy in his desire for, and need of, human contact. But his resorting to scavenging and duplicity as a means of survival in the society in which he finds himself, is an aspect of which we are clearly meant to disapprove, and it is for this that he is denounced in the end. But the qualities of attraction and repulsion are still present in him, as in earlier grotesques, even if not in such an exhuberant form. The existence of these opposites makes any final judgement ambiguous.

Less ambiguous is Jenny Wren, who, as Dunn shows, 'attains a tragi-comic compromise by remaining aware of the seriousness of her plight and by assuming a comic attitude to achieve conditional relief from her problem'.[1] Dunn astutely points out that these shifts from the serious to the comic in Dickens's presentation helped to keep his sentimentality in check.[2] It is the more subdued treatment that Dickens uses here, and the fact that Jenny Wren is related to the central issues of the novel, that Henry James overlooked when he asserted that

> Like all Dickens's pathetic characters she is a little monster, she is deformed, unhealthy, unnatural; she belongs to the

from the "sportive" of Pickwick Papers to the "terrible grotesque" of later novels like Bleak House and Hard Times - bearing in mind, of course, Ruskin's own caveat that the two are never properly separable' (p. 198).

1. Dunn, p. 153. For his discussion on Jenny Wren, which it would be superfluous to repeat here, see pp. 153-55.
2. Dunn, p. 154.

> troop of hunchbacks, imbeciles and precocious children who have carried on the sentimental business in all Mr Dickens's novels, the Little Nells, the Smikes, the Paul Dombeys.[1]

James obviously saw Jenny Wren's role in terms of sentimentality and as a comic curiosity. I believe her role, like that of most grotesques in the later novels, to be more thematically relevant than James implied. Dickens's use of a tragi-comic mode in his presentation of Jenny Wren not only kept his sentimentality in check, but also enabled him to relate her grotesqueness successfully to the world in which she exists. Although psychically alienated, with her reversal of role with her father, with her use of dolls as substitutes for real people, and with her constant emphasis on her own grotesqueness, she nonetheless still strives to succeed in the world in which she finds herself. She does not allow her own illusions to replace the affection and contact she can make with such people as Riah, Lizzie and Sloppy.

Ultimately, however, Dickens's attitude to grotesque behaviour was to accept it when it coexisted with the Victorian ethical value of industriousness (even though that value could have its dehumanizing aspects), but to reject it when it showed a complete disregard for generally accepted values or expressed itself as a defiance of society. However much the grotesqueness of Silas Wegg differed from that of Jenny Wren, its origin stemmed from the same root of isolation and alienation. But this was a study in causation with which Dickens did not concern himself. Although society, with its neglect of those with some marked difference, could be held partly responsible for the maladjustment of Silas, Dickens condemns Silas because Silas's illusions have not only replaced

1. Henry James, review of Our Mutual Friend, The Nation, 1 (1868), pp. 786-87, repr. in Views and Reviews, p. 156; The House of Fiction, ed. Leon Edel, p. 255; and in The Dickens Critics, ed. Ford and Lane, p. 50.

his grasp of reality, but have made him antisocial as well. By contrast, Jenny, by her perseverance, forms worthwhile human relationships despite her grotesque mannerisms, and, by her industriousness, fulfils a function within the framework of society.

Thus, while Dickens sees, as a cause of grotesque behaviour and alienation, a society in which materialism has replaced human values, he makes responsibility for that grotesqueness an individual one. It is this split between causation and responsibility that once again makes his moral judgement ambiguous.

As I have said, very few of the characters discussed in this section can be regarded as mad in the sense that their illusions and abnormalities have prevented them from functioning on the everyday level. From a literary point of view, characters like these were initially used by authors in the early Victorian era to show colourful local detail by their vitality and variety, and to provide comic relief by their intrinsic interest as curiosities. In terms of their relationship to the thematic concerns of the novel, authors were content to make the point that despite their grotesqueness, these characters often retained simpler and more praiseworthy virtues than those whose chief purpose in life was the pursuit of materialism at the expense of human relationships.

As the era progressed and deviances in human behaviour became less easily discernible as clearly defined types, authors began to regard such deviance as a reaction to a society in which much also had gone wrong. These characters then began to be used to express fundamental issues about society, and accordingly became better integrated with the central themes of the novels. They became relfective of a general criticism of society, and their

eccentricity became explicable in terms of a response to the increasing complexity and dehumanization of that society, rather than simply being seen as individual idiosyncrasy. But the extent to which deviance from normality was an acceptable response to changing societal values was a question which the authors, including Charles Dickens, largely by-passed.

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